

Juleps and Clover

by

M. VAUGHAN WILDE



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And has not such a story from of Old,
Down man's successive generations roll'd,
Of such a cloud of saturated Earth
Cast by the Maker into Human mold?
—OMAR KHAYYAM.



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JULEPS AND CLOVER.

CHAPTER I.

But come (and leave the Lot
Of Kaikobád and Kaikhosrú forgot:
Let Rustum lay about him as he will,
Or Hátim cry Supper—heed them not.)

With me, along some Strip of Herbage strown
That just divides the desert from the sown
Where name of Slave and Sultan scarce is known—
And pity Sultan Mahmud on his Throne.

Omar Khayyám.

“THIS air is like champagne, sir. It
fills my lungs as no other air in the
world can;” and the speaker drew in
a long breath and fanned his face with
his black slouch hat.

His companion smiled grimly, with-

out replying to what he evidently considered a harmless delusion; his Northern blood failed to respond to the quickening influences of the atmosphere the other man found so exhilarating. A few moments later, the two horsemen emerged from the shelter of the woods into a low-lying river meadow where the direct rays of the midsummer sun, beating down upon them, speedily convinced the Southerner that whatever merits the climate might have, it certainly did not deserve to be termed arctic. Then Wallace Ayer turned in his saddle toward his friend and said:

“What I admire in you Southerners, Lee, is the absolute unanimity with which you all agree upon the beauty of Southern women, the merits of Southern air, Southern questions, institutions—in short, everything that concerns the South. You feel called on to flare up at the slightest criticism of anything that affects your section of the country.

Now in the North, we have no special respect for 'Northern air or whiskey,' or 'Northern' horses or hotels as such, and would never dream of resenting any general criticism of our institutions.

"If I were to tell you," he continued, "that the air right here in these mountains, right here in God's country was rather hotter and more stifling than I have found it in the Sahara Desert, you would probably flare up at the suggestion."

Howard Lee laughed and replied good-naturedly :

"Oh, come now, you must not take us so seriously. We live by ourselves a good deal down here and perhaps, have become a trifle provincial. Those very faults you speak of, have their use—they all serve to bind us to our country, and to keep us in the road laid out by our ancestors. Other sections of the nation could follow us with great advantage, in that respect."

"Perhaps you are right," replied Wallace Ayer, "but then, too, some of us have ancestors, though we don't attach much value to their example. There is one Southern institution, however, that I do admire, without any qualifying adjectives whatsoever, and that is your Southern woman."

"Now you are worthy of the hospitality of the South," cried the Virginian. "Why, sir, the finest work of the Creator is a Southern woman who can make a mint julep with just the proper quantity of brandy and rum." Lee involuntarily moistened his lips and continued:

"The very idea makes me feel thirsty. In this fertile country nature provides the need and the means to fill it at the same time."

"Hum," returned the other, glancing dubiously at the turbulent stream rolling a few yards away through the meadow they were skirting, "the Manola looks to me somewhat muddy."

Lee rode down to the river bank. "It is muddy, two parts clay to one of water," and after anxiously scanning both banks of the rushing stream, he again shouted over his shoulder to Ayer:

"Do you mind a rather risky ford? Can you swim?"

"Not much," answered Ayer, "but why attempt it?"

"Because across that river and through the woods yonder, two miles from here, lives a Virginia lady who can make the finest julep in the South," answered Lee.

"These North Carolinians know nothing of real mint julep, sir."

"It's too hot to ride further, so we can spend the evening there and canter back to the club after dark."

"Well, I'll take the chance of a dip in the river. But do you know the ford?"

"There was a ford a few years ago,

that started a little below here and crossed the river obliquely," replied Lee, "but as the river is swollen from the recent rains, I doubt whether I can find it."

Both the men were mounted on three-quarter bloods—powerful animals, but badly broken, and Ayer especially, could place but little reliance on the good behavior of his horse when once in the water. They rode slowly along the shore until they came to a gently shelving beach, which Lee declared was the beginning of the ford. Here they turned their horses into the stream and allowed them to drink their fill. Then they pushed slowly out toward deeper water.

The Manola was about one hundred yards wide, deepening gradually from the bank where they were, until at the further side it ran in a fierce current of unknown depth. Piles of hewn logs, driftwood, dead leaves, underbrush, and

other débris were stranded on rocks and shoals here and there throughout the river, rocking and swaying with the current.

Lee reined in his horse and turned to his friend with a laugh.

"I don't believe there ever was a ford here," said he, "we must swim or turn back."

"Then we'll swim," replied Ayer, rather nettled at the suggestive lack of confidence in his horsemanship, and with more ado he urged his horse forward.

The horses waded into the water willingly and kept their footing without much effort, until a third of the way was crossed. The water rose slowly up the legs of the riders, filling their boots and creeping over the saddles, as the horses lost their foothold and settled down to swim. The farther bank was soft and yielding, but Lee, who was in front, succeeded in forcing his horse up

after several violent plunges. As he reached the top, he suddenly turned, and shaping his hand, funnel-like over his mouth, in order to be heard above the roar of the river: "Look out, that log is coming down on you."

Ayer, in the act of urging the beast up the bank glanced quickly back and saw a mass of driftwood which had accumulated against a huge oak log, slowly detach itself from its hold and float toward him. The pile had been held against the bank by some sticks and saplings, and these had been loosened by the struggles of Lee's horse in gaining the shore.

The great log stuck for a moment, but the force of the current on the mass of rubbish behind, tore it free from its hold, and it swept down the river.

Before it could reach him, Ayer swung his horse down stream and sharply spurred him. The river ran fiercely and eddied in under the bank. They were

on the outer side of a bend and the whole volume of the river was hurled against the shore which had been undermined and was jutting cliff-like above the water. Magnolia and oaks tangled with wild grapevine leaned far out from the bank with exposed roots which threatened to drag Ayer from his horse as he swept under them. The logs and driftwood had parted company and were racing like terror-stricken soldiers, close behind horse and man. Before him the bank towered higher and higher until around the bend it became a small bluff. Not a foothold was there for man or beast on that clay-bound shore, and he realized there was but one chance to save his horse. Slipping gently from the saddle into the water, he let his legs float as near the surface as possible, to avoid the hoofs of the animal, who was now laboring painfully in the current which twisted and swung him around like a straw in a whirlpool, now dashing

him against the slippery bank, now hurling him against the masses of drift-wood.

Ayer clung to the pommel with his left hand and guided his horse with the other. By this means he kept well ahead of the log which was booming along with tremendous speed, crashing through the roots and débris caught against the bank, until suddenly as the bend was almost passed, a fallen tree confronted him. Clinging by its roots to solid earth, the trunk and branches of an immense elm projected some eighty feet into the river. As the current dashed horse and rider against it, Ayer sprang clear of his plunging animal and dived.

The current caught him, turned him over and over and lodged him among the submerged branches. He made one desperate plunge, grasped a solid hold, lost it, seized it again and drew his head above water.

Gasping for breath and shaking off the water, he slowly and painfully pulled himself up on the tree. He looked around. No horse could be seen. The river ran as fiercely as ever, but it seemed more silent. The log and drift were piled up in hopeless confusion among the branches of the submerged end of the tree. Suddenly the mass raised, and there appeared well-nigh under it, his horse, which with one tremendous effort broke clear of the tree-top and floated down the stream. That effort was the last spasm of the drowning animal. Ayer shouted encouragement to him with all his strength, and the faithful beast with one dying struggle raised his head above the stream in his master's direction, struck half out of the water, and then sank back beneath the surface of the river.

Ayer watched with breathless interest the convulsions of his drowning horse, and when all was over he drew

himself slowly from limb to limb of the gigantic elm tree, and so gained the shore, not without confronting more danger, however, as the fallen monarch of the forest still tottered on its ruined throne, and swayed by the torrent, it seemed bent on tossing back its human burden, to the waters beneath.

CHAPTER II.

Look to the Rose that blows about us—"Lo,
Laughing," she says, "into the World I blow;
At once the silken Tassel of my Purse
Tear, and its Treasures on the Garden throw."

Omar Khayyám.

WHILE Ayer was struggling in the Manola, Lee had made every effort to keep abreast of him on the bank. The dense underbrush had forced him to take a circuitous route, and it was only with the utmost difficulty that he made any progress. His horse stumbled and tripped over the tangled roots and hanging grapevines, and the rider was struck repeatedly by the low swinging boughs and nearly swept off his horse. Lee did not have much anxiety about his companion however, as he knew Ayer was a thorough horseman, and believed he would extricate himself with-

out serious trouble from his difficult situation. So that when he heard Ayer's shout and broke through to the point from whence it came, he was surprised to find his comrade without his horse.

"Lee," said Ayer, as his friend rode up, "I've lost the best horse in the state. He went down, poor fellow, just below that eddy by the snag there. We must get him out and give him a decent burial—he was too fine an animal for the fish and buzzards."

Ayer then gave Lee a more detailed account of the accident as he drew off his boots and poured out the water.

"We can probably find your horse stranded on some of the mud bars down the river," said Lee, as his friend concluded his story, "and can at any rate get the saddle and bridle, but we would better hurry over to Peters' before you feel the chill settling in your bones."

"Not much danger of a chill on a

day like this," replied Ayer, "but I should not mind a nip of that mint julep you were talking about a few moments ago. Don't think Mrs. Peters will object to my appearance, do you, Lee? My hat's gone."

"Your appearance is all right; we don't bother about ceremony down here. Give me your coat and then pick a way through the brush for my horse, or I'll get my eyes prodded out by some of these branches."

"All right, but which way is the road?" inquired Ayer, starting toward an opening in the tangled thicket.

"Straight ahead," replied Lee. "I can't get through there on horseback."

"Then get off and lead him. It's the only way. You should be thankful you are on dry land," laughed Ayer, watching his companion half slide and half fall off his horse, after trying to force out of his way a three inch maple bough which just cleared the saddle.

“You don’t seem to care much about losing a valuable mount,” replied Lee, “you Northerners are disgustingly rich. Stand and watch three hundred dollars disappear in the river and joke about it.”

Ayer’s face became serious and he said more slowly: “I am sorry for the poor brute. He fought hard and I love anything, man or beast, that dies game.”

After a half hour’s sharp work, they emerged into a clearing which proved to be part of the Peters’ plantation. As they drew near the rambling old house they saw on the veranda several persons—two ladies and three men.

“Lee,” said Ayer, “I think I shall be much more presentable on horseback after my ducking, and I wish you would change places with me. I can take your horse down to the stable and wait there while you explain to Mr. Peters. He then may send me down some dry clothes. I don’t want to make my ini-

cial bow before those two pretty women in such garb as this."

Lee assented, and the change was quickly made. The two then moved up over the level greensward toward the house. Just as he was about to direct Ayer to the negro quarters and the stables beyond, Frazier Peters spied them, and running down the steps, greeting Lee with profuse hospitality; would hear to nothing but that they must come up and be presented to the ladies at once. After shaking hands, Lee turned toward Ayer and said: "This is my Yankee college chum, Wallace Ayer, of New York, whom I have persuaded to join with me in buying some of the timber around here. He's a good fellow for a Yankee—loves us Southerners, and tries hard to approve of our institutions. They don't wear hats nowadays in New York—and clothes, as you see, sag a good deal this season."

During this speech, Ayer shook hands with Mrs. Peters over the low railing of the veranda, and twisted a little uneasily in his saddle as Lee gave a sly wink and laughed heartily at his own joke.

"Mrs. Peters," said he, "don't mind Lee—that's what he calls badinage. The Manola is responsible for my appearance, and he for my presence here."

Mrs. Peters laughed merrily.

"We are delighted to meet strangers in this remote corner of the world, especially when they are Northerners, and friends of Mr. Lee. Do come into the house, Mr. Ayer, Frazier will fit you out with dry clothes."

Frazier Peters, who was a portly and most placid looking gentleman, hastened to add:

"You must have a glass of something, or you will feel the chill. We dread chills down here and always make it a point to guard against them in time.

Come in, I've got plenty of clothes that will fit you. Here, 'Lish, you lazy nigger, take the gentleman's horse down to the barn and give him oats, sir, oats, do you understand, you grinning rascal?"

Ayer gladly accepted Mr. Peters' offer and dismounted. Fifteen minutes later the Northerner emerged from his host's room with his compact and muscular frame encased in a white duck suit belonging to Mr. Peters. That gentleman had enjoyed the good things of life and was short and decidedly stout. His best duck suit had therefore on Ayer's figure, the fit of a set of Pajamas. Ayer groaned silently, as he looked down at the extraordinary appearance he presented and then put the best face possible on the matter and started downstairs.

When he reached the veranda, Mrs. Peters laughed heartily, as also did Lee and Miss Gwynne, to whom he was now introduced, that Ayer speedily

entered into the spirit of the thing and by the time the mint julep was produced and passed around, he had quite forgotten his clothes.

Mr. Peters insisted that Lee and Ayer should not think of going back to Wainhill that night and sent a man on horseback to the Metropolitan Club, where Ayer had a room, for some clothes. Two negroes were also dispatched with ropes to find and bury the drowned horse, and bring back the trappings.

Ayer was quite at home with the party, when the dinner was served at seven; and when he found himself placed at table next to Miss Gwynne, he slowly awoke to the fact that she was the most supremely beautiful girl he had ever met. Extensive as was his knowledge of women in his own and many other lands, Ayer had never before seen such eyes, to which her almost perfect face was a mere setting. Dreamy

and languid, they rested on him in a half curious, wholly interested manner. He was the first Northerner Miss Gwynne had really known, for in her native Georgian town, so far removed from the busy haunts of men, strangers never penetrated.

The impression of her beauty on Ayer was only transient, however. He merely noted the fact that she was beautiful, very young, apparently not very bright and probably as badly brought up as most Southern girls he had seen; so he turned and devoted himself to his hostess.

Mrs. Peters was a Virginia woman, tall and finely formed, a thorough woman of the world and really brilliant in conversation. Like most women who are well married to a husband rather too old, and decidedly slow, she was fond of attention, and loved a little *affaire*, quite innocent of course, but still with enough snap in it to arouse

the torpid blood of her husband. Under a stimulus of this sort, Mr. Peters would invariably pull himself together, abandon his quiet solitaire, chess, and afternoon siesta, and devote himself with all his youthful fire and grace to his wife.

He would ride miles with her in the hottest of weather to pay a call; would accompany her to balls, a form of amusement he detested, and would emulate the brightest of her followers with an unexpected flow of wit. When he was at length thoroughly aroused, for, perhaps, the twentieth time in his married life, to the fact that he was the luckiest of men to possess such a charming wife, and that he was a fool to think of anything else—when that state of things was brought about—Mrs. Peters would suddenly become absorbed in her husband and calmly drop the poor attaché whose attention had been the cause of all this turmoil, and who, to

the end of his days never quite knew what had happened to him.

The afternoon that Ayer and Lee arrived at the plantation, Mrs. Peters had been looking about for some time, unable to find a new victim, an event due solely to the fact that there had been no new arrivals in Wainhill, since Mr. David Barbs of Philadelphia had suddenly departed on the daybreak train during the preceding spring, leaving behind a vast range of conjecture to account for his haste. In consequence of this dearth of available men, Frazier Peters had relapsed into his placid somnolent state which, interspersed with julep and chess, he regarded as the proper condition in hot weather for a gentleman and a Southerner.

In Ayer, Mrs. Peters thought she detected precisely the proper person needed to arouse her husband. Lee had been through the mill himself some three years before and could be relied upon

not to warn his comrade. Mrs. Peters and Lee had been old friends in Richmond, but had not met since Mr. Peters had renounced city life and retired with his wife to his native Carolina, after an especially exciting but harmless *affaire* of hers, with a naval officer.

The two men who were with the Peters's when Ayer and Lee arrived, proved to be neighboring planters who had little to say for themselves at dinner, beyond addressing some rather stilted phrase of compliment to Miss Gwynne or Mrs. Peters.

They drank their whiskey straight, and evidently did not approve of the easy *savoir faire* of the Northerner which put him at once on a more familiar plane with the ladies than their respectful and serious homage had attained in years. Parker the younger, seemed quite put out, at what he whispered to his friend Davis, was "Damned Yankee impudence, sir," and both with-

drew when the cigars were lighted. After Peters had seen them mount and ride off into the darkness he returned to the dining-room and sank with a sigh of relief into his armchair, remarking to Ayer :

“Fine specimens of our Southern gentry, sir, fine specimens, but they take life too seriously. Can’t say that they like Northerners, either,” he added, reflectively. “Major Parker’s father was killed in the Peninsular, sir, and Joe Davis’ family lost about everything. He’s got a little lead in his right leg. Noticed the limp, didn’t you? He was the youngest of four brothers in Pickett’s charge. Two of them up there yet. Joe was sixteen then. You should see their family silver—finest in the state. All they have left now except land. Can’t blame them for a little feeling, sir. You folks up North didn’t turn out the way the people around here did.”

"Well," said Ayer, "some of us did. I was, of course, too young, but my father spent four hard years trying to get into Richmond,—and got there too."

"I think," broke in Lee, to prevent a conversation on so dangerous a subject, "that all Southerners respect and honor the men who fought. In fact, what little feeling remains on either side of Mason and Dixon's line is among those who stayed at home."

"I quite agree with you in that," said Ayer, warmly. "What we need for a complete reunion is another American party—we Americans are being slowly but surely pushed out of our own land by the foreigners we have let in. Serves us right, though, we've got too much so-called 'liberality,' and not enough race pride."

"Ayer and I had reached that conclusion once before to-day," said Lee; "but don't you think we would better join the ladies."

“Why,” said Peters, glancing at his watch, “do you know what time it is? It’s twelve o’clock. The ladies must have retired long ago. Mr. Ayer, you must need sleep after your swim. They have given you the red room. My man will bring you coffee and toast about ten, and we won’t let you go back to-morrow until evening. I want to show you over the place.”

Ayer took the candle handed him, and after bidding his host good-night, was shown to his bedroom by a small darkey boy, called 'Lish. 'Lish's chief occupation in life seemed to be that of general disturber, in the household. He possessed a persistent faculty for getting in everybody's way. Beginning with the master; to the cook in the kitchen, and so on down to the hostler of the stables, he was alternately be-rated, scolded and petted. What his opinion was of such treatment, no one ever knew, for through all his many

and various exciting episodes, 'Lish kept his own counsel.

The bedroom was spacious and well aired. It contained a comparatively modern bed, and chintz covered furniture. The amount of furniture was scant and ludicrously out of proportion to the size of the room, although some of it was very old and valuable.

The matting on the floor was new and immaculately clean, and Ayer felt that his host, while not rich, was certainly far removed from the threadbare gentility of so many of his neighbors.

A row of books on the mantel attracted his attention, and he walked over, and with the aid of the candle examined the titles. All were bound in cloth and well thumbed. "The Lost Cause," "Holy Bible," "Shakespeare," "Milton," "Speeches of John C. Calhoun," "Life of Jefferson Davis," and Owen Meredith's "Lucille," stood ranged in strange communion. Just

above the books hung a fine old engraving of "Wolf, On The Plains Of Abraham," while flanking either side of the bed, in quaint keeping with the mouldy rose flowered wall-paper, were two cheap, gaudy prints of "The Blonde Beauty," and "The Brunette Beauty," framed in a narrow moulding which had at some remote period, been gilt.

Ayer smiled, and blowing out the candle, dropped to sleep with the thought: "charming people, but hopelessly out of the great current of modern life." He too, possessed much of the fast disappearing chivalry which he admired and laughed at in others, but in his make-up, the gentle blood was strengthened with sterner and stronger qualities.

CHAPTER III.

And much as Wine has played the Infidel
And robb'd me of my Robe of Honour—Well!
I wonder often what the Vinters buy
One half so precious as the goods they sell.

Omar Khayyám.

THE next morning, Ayer was aroused by 'Lish, who brought in a tray of coffee and corn muffins, and informed him with all the dignity of a Methodist elder at campmeeting—that his horse had been found and buried. 'Lish threw open the blinds. The sunlight and fresh morning air streamed in, laden with the dewy fragrance of the honeysuckle clustering about the window casings; and beyond, the river crinkled with the light of a new day.

Nothing human was in sight and Ayer took "Lucille" from the mantel

shelf and ran through its pages as he leaned on the pillow and sipped his coffee. He read awhile, and then lit a pipe which 'Lish had thoughtfully brought with the coffee.

"Strange," thought he, "that a woman like 'Lucille' could make so much trouble and rouse such worldlings as Arthur Vargrave and the Duc de Luvois from themselves, into deeper feelings. It's so much pleasanter to drift along and avoid the intenser emotion. Well, I've escaped thus far—but I suppose my time will come," and laying down the book, he recalled the men whom he had known—the reckless and the brilliant—the conscientious and plodding—all alike, they had one by one bowed beneath the yoke of matrimony.

"Love, yes, that is easy, but marry, never."

Ayer sat up at the thought. As he did so, there was a light knock, the

door opened and Mr. Peters' face appeared.

"Good-morning, Mr. Ayer," said he, "I hope you rested well last night. Dress and come downstairs. I want to take you over the stables. Oh! by the bye, my man has brought your clothes from the club. I'll send them up." And the host departed.

A few minutes later, Ayer once more arrayed in presentable garb, came downstairs and found on the veranda, Mrs. Peters and Miss Gwynne quietly reading in easy chairs. The sun had now reached the zenith, its hot glare shrivelling the grassy lawn as a simoon from the desert, even the leaves on the old apple tree cornering with the veranda, curled up their velvety greenish-gray edges in mute protest.

"I hope you liked the red room," said Mrs. Peters, after the morning greetings had been exchanged, "it's the coolest one we have."

"I slept like a log," replied Ayer, "and have been wondering ever since breakfast why you call it the red room."

"I can't imagine why, but it has always been called so." She coquettishly waved him toward a low seat on her left. "Sit down and talk to us. Frazier is so tiresome—always dragging men out to the stables and down to the new wine cellar in such hot weather, and we see so few visitors here."

"Do stay, Mr. Ayer," chimed in Miss Gwynne, "I want to know a real Northerner; Mr. Peters," continued she, as that gentleman appeared in the doorway,—“Mr. Ayer says he would much rather stay here in the shade while you take Mr. Lee to the stables to see the niggers and horses.”

"I said nothing of the sort, Mr. Peters;" laughed Ayer, "but as a matter of fact, it is too hot to go out. Can't I see them later in the afternoon?"

“Certainly, if you prefer. I’ll let Miss Gwynne show you around then,” and Peters disappeared into the house.

Ayer chatted an hour or so with the ladies, Mrs. Peters doing most of the talking and the younger woman breaking in occasionally in a soft accent common enough in the extreme South.

Miss Gwynne was spending the season with her relations, the Peters, in what was to her, a cool summer resort—the Carolina mountains—and had as yet, rather a dull time of it. She was nineteen as the years go, but in experience—could probably have given her flirtatious cousin Joy, cards and spades. A figure that was large and simply superb in its proportions. Beautiful teeth, and a mouth whose corners would turn up in the most provoking manner. The subtle charm of her eyes, and voice however, were her greatest attractions, and their influence made themselves felt, slowly, but irre-

sistibly. This fact was known to none better than to Clover Gwynne herself. Ayer found in her a new type. He was so accustomed to the admiration of women, that their evident preference for his society hardly excited his vanity.

He accepted the fact as a birthright, along with many other advantages which Nature in a beneficent mood had seen fit to confer upon him at his birth—famous ancestors—his lithe, muscular frame—fine eyes—good breeding—as much a matter of course, as his well assured position in New York as a society and club man.

He had seen through Mrs. Peters the first hour he talked with her, had perceived her harmless little schemes, and did not propose to forego the amusement they promised him. But the girl was different. Her attitude puzzled him. She did not respond to his sallies, nor show any signs of approval—although he made—for him—unusual ef-

forts to fascinate, and brought forward his most amusing stories and anecdotes; he was deeply versed in the light gossip women find so absorbing. And the girl's presence seemed to exhilarate him as a strong stimulant. A new sensation to one so blasé.

When a little later he was summoned by the servant to Mr. Peters whom he found holding forth in the wine cellar on the merits of Kentucky whiskey, Miss Gwynne said to her cousin :

"I thought Northern men were such boors. This one seems to me to be way beyond our Georgia men. He has seen more and knows more than the men down here, and oh! how easy and graceful are his manners. Isn't he handsome? He makes you think of one whose grandfather must have been very highly bred. They always told me that the Yankees were such vulgar people."

"Yes, my dear," replied Joy Peters,

"no doubt he compares favorably with Georgians, for he is really an exceptionally fine gentleman, but you should see our Richmond men. We have lots like Mr. Ayer. Besides, you know, New Yorkers are not really Yankees, and generally resent being called so. They are to my mind, the most civilized of the Northerners. You know many of them sympathized with our side during the war. Although," she added, after a moment's pause, "Frazier tells me Mr. Ayer's father was a Union officer."

"I am glad he fought, or his father did," said Miss Gwynne. "My father always said that the meanest white men alive, were the copperheads up North."

The ladies resumed their reading and the afternoon sun slipped quietly down behind the tree-tops of the orchard.

Miss Gwynne at length put by her book to watch a stray cat sniffing around a bed of mint, which was the particular

pride of Mrs. Peters. Pussy disappeared in the mint, and Clover turned toward her cousin, giving utterance to her thoughts.

"I think the men might like some more julep. Mr. Lee said yesterday that you Virginians were the only people that knew how to make it," and then after a pause, she added: "don't you think it is funny that two men so unlike as Mr. Lee and Mr. Ayer, should be such great friends? I don't believe Mr. Ayer likes Southerners. Did you notice how haughtily he looked at Mr. Parker when he spoke of 'Black Republicans,' at dinner last night? For the moment I feared he meant to challenge Parker. I believe he is just as quick to flash up as any of our cavaliers, as you call them. I like him to look so masterful and strong."

"Don't you bother too much about what Mr. Ayer thinks, or what he does," replied Mrs. Peters in a high,

harsh tone, and as Clover raised her eyebrows, in unfeigned astonishment, Mrs. Peters got up, saying:

"I must get the julep, or Frazier will be storming around here. Nothing arouses him so much as having visitors."

'Lish, who had just succeeded in poking the stray cat out of the mint bed, with the aid of his long hickory fishing-pole, was dispatched for the men. They came, bringing some julep, which Mr. Peters had attempted to make himself, in defiance of the unwritten law, which holds in the South, that this delectable concoction can only be mixed by a woman—"a woman of birth, sir," as Mr. Peters explained. The julep was somewhat stronger than usual, and under its influence, the genial nature of the host asserted itself.

"Joy, my dear," said he, "do you remember that Ohio fellow who was brought over here last Spring by Mr.

Joshua Barbs? What was his name; Busby, wasn't it? Yes, Busby. He was a good fellow, a little stiff and sat so near the edge of his chair, I feared he'd slip off. Well, one afternoon Mr. Busby rode up with Barbs, and I sent word to Joy to make some julep for a Yankee—that means not too much whiskey,—they're not used to it, you know.—It was very hot and Busby looked thirsty. The loving cup; this one.—You see it has a glass bottom—was filled and handed to him first. It was his first julep, and I think it was his first loving cup—at any rate, he gathered all the straws, and commenced to drink. Finally he settled back in his chair with a sigh of perfect bliss, still drinking, and his eyes wandered with a far away expression, up to the ceiling. The julep could be seen through the bottom of the glass sinking slowly—you know this cup holds two quarts. A look of horror crept over Joshua

Barb's face—you see he felt responsible for Busby's behavior, and I believe from what Joy told me afterward, that I"—

"Yes," cried Mrs. Peters, breaking in and ending the story for him: "I was ashamed of you. You looked as though your last chance for a julep was going for life. Mr. Busby did stop at length, and looking around, he said:

"'Ain't any of you folks goin' to drink with me?'

"Mr. Barbs groaned aloud, and Mr. Peters for the first time since I married him, lost his temper, and cried:

"'That sir, depends entirely upon you, sir.'"

Peters laughed heartily at his own sayings, and told how Mr. Busby had been tied on his horse in case—as Joshua Barbs suggested—that the sun proved too much for him.

"For my part," continued the Southerner, "I don't blame the Ohio man

much. Just imagine having wasted thirty-five years of life without ever having known the unspeakable delight—the satisfaction—consolation—and lastly, the amount of absolute refreshment for soul and body, to be obtained in a mint julep, made only as a Southern lady, born and bred, can make it.

“First off, you know, she takes a long thin glass, in her pretty hands, and while she’s looking around for the sugar bowl, she bruises a sprig of mint in the glass carefully throwing out the crushed leaves afterward. Then with her great-grandmother’s silver spoon, she stirs half a tablespoonful of fine sugar, with just enough water to melt it. Two sprigs of mint next go against either side of the glass, stems down, and to hold them in place, she fills the glass two-thirds full of crushed ice. After that, comes a half a jigger of your best brandy. Next, the same quantity of fine old Jamaica or St.

Croix rum. Now drop into this nectar of the gods, a strawberry or two—wild ones if possible, their odor is finer than the tame—a bit of pineapple, half a slice of orange with the peel left on; then take two long white oat straws, and while you consume it slowly, return thanks to the Giver of all Good.”

And suiting the action to the word, Peters buried his Roman nose in the mint glass. Joy smiled at her husband's unwonted eloquence.

“It takes a powerful emotion to drive Frazier to utterance,” she said to Lee.

While Peters was holding forth on the merits of Virginia women and mint juleps, Wallace Ayer and Clover had drifted to the opposite end of the long veranda. Clover, half reclining in the hammock, with her misty white gown clinging round her plump figure, as though it loved to reveal the perfect curves of so fair a maiden. To keep the hammock swaying, one shapely foot

tapped the floor.—“ The prettiest ankle I have ever seen ”—idly thought Ayer as he sat on the veranda railing, with his back resting against a pillar.

The sun fell in level red rays athwart the white swaying gown, and creeping over to Lee, reminded him that many miles lay between them and Wainhill.

“ Ayer,” he called, “ I am truly sorry to tear you away from such pleasant company.” And ordering their horses, they were soon homeward bound. Ayer was mounted on Peters’ best hunter. As they caught a parting glimpse of the house through the trees, Ayer discerned the figure of Clover at the window of her room, watching them out of sight.

CHAPTER IV.

Whether at Næshápúr or Babylon,
Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,
The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop
The Leaves of Life keep falling one by one.

THREE days after the events recounted in the last chapter, Ayer knocked at Lee's room, which faced his own across the hall. A sleepy growl came from within, which quickly changed to an intelligible voice on Ayer's explaining who it was. Lee unlocked the door, and then rolling back into bed, said:

"I thought it was that nigger Pete. Don't mind my yawns, I'll be awake in a moment."

Ayer seated himself on the foot of the bed, and after smoking contemplatively for a moment, remarked:

"It seems to me, Lee, that we could

do worse than ride over to the Peters' place and thank them for their kindness to us the other day."

"All right," said Lee, stretching himself, and showing no disposition whatever to rise, "I'll send for my coffee and then go with you. It's only eight o'clock now, and we can get there before it's too hot to ride comfortably. Had your breakfast?"

Ayer shook his head.

The only servant in the club, after repeated summons, appeared, and breakfast, or rather coffee was ordered for both in Lee's room.

The old Metropolitan Club like many other things in Wainhill, was more name than reality, and lived somewhat precariously on the proceeds of the bar bill and the money spent by the occasional visitors who came to town from time to time.

The arrival of Lee and Ayer had created a mild furore in the town, and

their taking rooms at the club had averted its financial ruin for that season, at least.

"Lee," said Ayer, as they were eating breakfast, "tell me something about this Georgia girl at the Peters'. Is she as unsophisticated as she seems?"

"Oh, she's young, all right;" replied Lee, guardedly, "but I think you'll find very little of the schoolgirl in her. Her people of course, are 'first families.' In fact, her father is noted even in Georgia for his family pride, and—her grandfather was"—

"Never mind her grandfather, tell me something about herself. Is she a flirt, or does she take people, men I mean, *au grand serieux*?"

"Now that's something you can judge for yourself, better than I can tell you. You know women, and ought to be able to read a young girl like that at a glance."

"I don't profess to understand

women," replied Ayer. "No man does who has seen much of them. They don't understand themselves half the time. But you have not answered my question, old fellow."

"Is she a flirt? Is she unsophisticated? Is she quiet? Is she fast?" laughed Lee. "All Southern women are the first and none of them are the last."

"That's a trifle obscure," said Ayer, with a smile; "if I had made such a sweeping remark about anything Southern, you would have resented it instantly. I see that I shall have to find out for myself. However, you may tell me something of her family without going back to her remote ancestors, if you will."

"She has a father and two unmarried brothers, older than herself," said Lee, checking off the items on his fingers. "Mother died years ago. They are quite rich for Georgia—big planta-

tion. Had hundreds of niggers, 'befo de wah,' and—anything else you'd like to know?"

"Oh no, your description is a perfect picture. You admit nothing except the family silver, or, is it possible—horrible thought—that the Gwynne's have none."

"Lots of it," laughed Lee, "at least they had. Buried it you know, to save it from Sherman's bummers, and have not yet found the hiding place. I suppose you've heard that story before."

"Many's the time," replied his friend; "what immense quantities of silver must have been used in the South! Come, get up, you can't possibly stay in bed any longer."

Two hours later when the men arrived at the Peters' plantation, Mrs. Peters and Miss Gwynne came out on the veranda and greeted them with evident pleasure.

"It has been awfully stupid here the

last few days," said Miss Gwynne, extending both hands, and grasping Ayer's. "I'm so glad you have come. I intended to ride this afternoon, all alone—Joy don't care to go."

"Mayn't I go with you?" said Ayer, instantly. "We can start about four and I'll bring you back in time for dinner."

"Of course, you may ride with me," said Clover, archly, "only you must take me into town, as I have to dine with the Barrys, at the Beauregard this evening."

"How are you going to get back here," inquired Ayer, "or are you to spend the night there?"

"Well," said Clover, with apparent hesitation, "Mr. Peters promised to call for me, but I suppose you'll volunteer now."

"Most certainly I shall," replied Ayer, and so it was arranged.

"My dear Clover," said Mrs. Peters

to Miss Gwynne, when the ladies were alone after luncheon, "I shall certainly have to write your father that you will need looking after. You were shockingly bold with Mr. Ayer this morning. Here I am, giving you an opportunity to establish yourself. For the sake of the family, I trust you will behave with becoming dignity."

"Oh, father won't mind. Northern men are so conventional,—I was forced to talk that way. Mr. Ayer could not take a gentle hint. Besides," she added, innocently, looking Joy straight in the eye, "I didn't suppose you wanted him."

"Clover," said Mrs. Peters, with dignity, "you are an extremely silly girl, and will get yourself into trouble, if you go on in this way. Mr. Ayer is not a man to flirt with and then throw over. You will not get off so easily with him."

"I'm not afraid," replied Clover, with

a smile. "I reckon he can take care of himself. Mr. Lee told me the other day he was an awful trifier. Always something new on hand and never in earnest about anything. I guess a little rough handling will do him good, and besides I'd give anything to ruffle his calm assurance of manner."

Mrs. Peters, who had been watching with increasing uneasiness Ayer's demeanor toward her cousin, had concluded that her own chances of absorbing his attention were fast declining, and felt called upon to interfere with true feminine love of meddling in the little game commencing under her eyes.

"Have a care, Clover," said she. "I've seen more men than you have and sometimes one happens along, who is very hard to manage. If you take my advice, you"—but Miss Gwynne cut short any further admonition by tumbling out of the hammock, saying that

she thought it about time to put on her riding habit.

Meanwhile Ayer had patiently listened to Mr. Peters' somewhat lengthy recollections of war times. The conversation had then turned on the respective merits of North Carolina and Virginia.

This last topic was a source of contention between the two Southerners, as Lee shared strongly in the feeling prevailing throughout the South, that North Carolinians, with exceptions of course, were a pretty poor lot, and he was not at all times able to disguise this sentiment.

"Of course, Mr. Peters, you understand," said Lee, "I have no personal feeling in the matter whatever, but I have always held to the idea that Carolina's Penal Colony in her early days of precarious existence may have had a certain amount of unpleasant bearing on a few strains of Carolina's blood—

mind now, I don't say all, but only a small minority; and then again, when one considers the early influence of the bold buccaneers and fierce pirates who infested her shores, finding in the peculiar formation of her many reefs and harbors, a haven of refuge in times of trouble.

"For more than a decade after its founding, nearly all of Carolina's currency consisted of the Spanish gold and silver, brought in by free-booters. But when the pirates were so unwise as to turn against their friendly hosts, and the swaggering Blackbeard held Charleston itself to ransom, a new light as to the iniquity of piracy dawned upon the Carolinians in that early day, and they finished Kidd's career at Execution Dock and swung Blackbeard's shaggy head from the bowsprit of a Virginia cruiser."

This argument—to the great amusement of Ayer, grew gradually warmer

until Lee brought the discussion to an abrupt close by saying :

“ Why, even Ayer knows that all the people living in the northern tier of counties in your state, call themselves Virginians ‘just over the border, sir,’ and all those that live in the southern part claim to be South Carolinians. Isn’t that so, Ayer ? ”

“ Don’t appeal to me,” said Ayer, seeing that even the good-natured Mr. Peters was about to lose his temper at this fresh insult to the state of his nativity. “ Come outside, I want Mr. Peters to show me the stables. Have you got a horse to sell me, Mr. Peters ? The one I rode over here to-day is a wretched beast. Does nothing but rack.”

Peters brightened up instantly at the prospect of a horse trade, and forgetting the vindication of North Carolina and Mackworth County, which he was on the point of delivering, led the way to the stables.

The merits of the various horses consumed the time rapidly, and while they were still talking, the order came for Miss Gwynne's horse.

Ayer at once had his horse brought out and mounting, rode up to the veranda. There he found Clover alone, buttoning her glove. The tight fitting riding habit showed her figure to the utmost advantage, and for the second time, Ayer felt creeping over him the suggestion of her strange power of fascination. Her horse was brought up, and when Ayer lifted her with a quick steady movement into the saddle, she smiled shyly at him and murmured in her prettiest soft Southern drawl —

“How strong you are ! I like strong men !”

At the implied compliment, Wallace Ayer blushed with pleasure—in fact he blushed twice—the second time at the idea that the appreciation of a simple

country maiden could cause him such elation.

—— He, the conquering hero of innumerable skirmishes among the daughters of Eve in every clime and nation — he, Wallace Ayer, who had taken for his own, the motto of the dissolute patricians of ancient Rome: “ZONAM SOLVERE.”

It was a new point of view, a new sensation, for him to regard a woman as an individual. Previous to his acquaintance with Clover, women, collectively, had represented in his estimation and experience, only an emotion. Whether they were of high or low degree, cultured or coarse—if he thought of it at all—he regarded their position in life as a mere matter of accident, in nowise affecting the essential fact, viz, their sex. If they were pretty and young, they gratified his highly cultivated sense of the beautiful—if not, “*voilà toute!*”—they were still women.

CHAPTER V.

And this I know : Whether the one True Light
Kindle to Love, or Wrath consume me quite,
One flash of It within the Tavern caught
Better than in the Temple lost out-right.

Omar Khayyâm.

THAT afternoon they rode far out into the mountains, through long unused roads and woodland bridal paths, where the trees met and interlaced above their heads. Once they emerged from the forest into an open space, where they could see the whole valley of the Manola at a glance. The scene was superb, with its pine clad mountains in the background, and the river and waiving cornfields at their feet.

Nature was beautiful, but man had defaced her in many places with his so-called improvements.

Clover and Ayer gladly turned into the woods again and cantered over the soft roads. The day was almost perfect. Cooler than it had been for weeks, and singularly restful. Here and there they passed a mountaineer's cabin, built in some secluded nook, surrounded by the ghastly trunks of huge pine trees, branchless and dead, but still standing sentinel-like—proudly erect, trees that had been girdled and killed by the shiftless settlers, who were too lazy to cut and burn them. The earth had been barely scratched around their roots and corn or wheat planted. With the wretched crop thus raised, a few hogs, and perhaps an illicit whiskey-still, the mountaineer and his gaunt family would eke out a forlorn existence.

Sad-faced, half-naked children, with blue eyes and shocks of faded yellow hair that bore evidence to the pure Anglo-Saxon stock of their ancestors,

stared at them from the cabin doorsteps, or hung listlessly from the tumble-down fences, as they rode past.

Sometimes they met a woman, near the clearing, often with a pipe in her toothless mouth and a look of hopeless poverty on her faded face. Not an overworked, or a diseased-stricken face, but one that seems never to have known what joy or comfort was. A woman that had never smiled. Men too, they occasionally passed, tall and gaunt, without a trace of brightness in their faces, but withal, a certain dogged independence of bearing, as though conscious of their hopeless wretchedness, but asked no help from man.

Such appeared to Ayer, the Carolinian mountaineers. The most distinctly American people on this continent—"white trash," their lowland neighbors called them, but still in some cases, the descendants of the stalwart old frontiersman, who reclaimed Kentucky and

Tennessee from the Indians, after the fiercest border wars on record.

Brave, the Northerner knew them to be, for they and their class in the South had filled the rank and file of the Confederate armies and formed one of the most gallant and devoted soldiers the world has ever seen. These were the men who fought for months, subsisting on nothing but parched corn, and who fell by the thousands, to uphold an oligarchy, and a social system which bore most oppressively upon them and their fellows, and which had been largely instrumental in lowering them to their present state.

Ayer and his companion talked but little except when the former told of scenes in far distant countries, which were recalled by their present surroundings. Sometimes they forded small streams, and once found themselves lost for a few moments, but the road was soon recovered, and at sun-

down they drew up their tired horses at the Beauregard Hotel, on the outskirts of Wainhill. There Ayer left Miss Gwynne, promising to call for her at nine that evening, and he rode slowly on to the club.

Ayer was on hand promptly at the time appointed and was kept waiting half an hour before Clover appeared. He was presented to the Barrys, a rather attractive family from Savannah, and after a short chat with them, Clover and he mounted and bade good-night to the little group which gathered to see them off.

They crossed the Manola by the Long Bridge, and skirted along the river until they reached the meadows a few miles above. Here they enjoyed a sharp gallop in the moonlight, to which a spice of excitement and danger was given by the horses shying at the wayside stumps. Then they let the horses walk, and gave themselves up to the

subtle influences of the scene and the hour. The moon half-grown, covered the trees and long meadow stretches with a soft downy light, and brought out with startling clearness the white road in front of them. Occasionally a hare scuttled across the way almost under the horses' feet, or an owl hooted in the distance.

The two rode on, chatting in an undertone until long past midnight, and when at length the Peters' place appeared, Ayer felt that he would be willing to ride on indefinitely in the moonlight—for a lifetime—if Clover were at his side.

The house loomed up silent and deserted. As he lifted Miss Gwynne gently from her horse it seemed to him that her arm rested on his shoulder in a half reluctant manner, an instant longer perhaps than was necessary for mere support. He glanced keenly at her face. Her deep, soft eyes were

tremulous with an emotional light, and the mouth smiled mischievously. "L'audace, Toujours l'audace," thought Ayer, and before she was firmly on the ground, he caught her up in his arms and carried her lightly up the steps to the veranda. She struggled for a moment and then let her face sink on his shoulder. For what seemed to him afterward the supreme moment of his life he held her there without a word from either. Then she wrenched herself suddenly loose and pointing quickly with her riding whip toward the horses, disappeared. The door shut behind her, and Ayer with his blood on fire, looked around to find the object which occasioned the sudden interruption, intending to visit his anger in no light measure on the man, beast or devil, who thus interfered with his pleasure.

The tired horses stood listlessly hanging their heads, and a little darkey was holding their bridles. The grin faded

quickly from the boy's dusky face when he saw Ayer's menacing expression. Annoyed as the Northerner was at being interrupted and spied upon, he could not help smiling at the terror of the child. He recognized the small 'Lish, who had brought him breakfast on his first visit to the Peters.

"What are you doing prowling around at this time of night, 'Lish?" said Wallace, not unkindly; gathering up his reins and springing into the saddle.

"Marse Peters he dun tole me to set up an' fetch yo' hosses to de stable," said the child, greatly relieved to find that his untimely interruption was to have no painful results.

"Very well, 'Lish," said Ayer, checking his horse for a moment, "tell Mr. Peters that I find I cannot accept his invitation to stay here to-night. I have some business in town early to-morrow."

The little darkey watched the horseman disappear behind the trees. Then he scrambled up on Miss Gwynne's horse and bursting with importance clattered to the barn.

"I dun thought he gwine to kill me shur dis time;" 'Lish confided to the mare as he stood on tiptoe to take off her bridle.

The first faint flushes of dawn were showing in the sky when Ayer drew rein before the club. He rang repeatedly before Pete appeared, rubbing his eyes. A few sharp words aroused him, and he led to the stable the now exhausted horse—the second Ayer had used up that day. The rider, too, was tired out, and drew off his boots without waiting for slow moving Pete's assistance. He threw himself on the bed and sank into a sleep that was not dreamless.

CHAPTER VI.

Oh threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise !
One thing at least is certain—This Life flies ;
One thing is certain and the rest is Lies ;
The Flower that once has blown, forever dies.

Omar Khayyám.

AYER'S previous life had rendered him unfitted to look very seriously on what he considered a mere episode. He was surprised at himself when he found how persistently every detail of his midnight ride and final scene with Miss Gwynne came back to him during the week that followed. His thoughts kept drifting back to her and resting with a strange satisfaction on their last interview. He could at times scarcely throw off the impression that her gentle touch was on his shoulder and he was haunted by a pair of dreamy eyes. However, he was not in the habit of

showing his feelings, and while Lee noticed the abstraction of his friend he failed to divine the true cause. At first he joked Ayer about his devotion to Miss Gwynne—but soon dropped the subject, as it seemed neither to annoy nor interest Ayer in the least.

“You have not changed a bit since college days, old man,” Lee had said one day at lunch, “you rush a girl as though she were the only woman on earth, and then drop her without the slightest apparent cause.

“Now the other day you rode off with Miss Gwynne with an enthusiasm I have rarely seen, even in you, and the next morning you walked around in a day dream and smoked like a blast furnace; now you don’t seem to care whether you ever go near the Peters’ place again or not.”

“I’d just as lieve go,—I’ll go to-day with you, if you say so,—shall we?” said Ayer, apparently without much

interest; "as to Miss Gwynne, I'm afraid you're right about my changeable habits."

"Why, Wallace," said Lee, "do you remember that pretty Landsdale girl you brought down from Providence to the Promenade? You were the type of devotion to her at the Sophomore German and completely turned her head. You were rather a good looking fellow in those days—and you used your advantages unmercifully. Then at the Promenade itself, you remember we shared a box in old Carl's Opera House, you suddenly marched off with pique and practically abandoned Miss Lansdale without reason, as far as any of us ever knew. I think you took Jim Barnard's girl up in the gallery and kept her from him half the evening. I never understood you that night; Miss Lansdale was far and away the best girl there, and I really think she was very fond of you."

“Lee,” commenced Ayer, seriously at first; but when some of the events of that evening came back to him, he could not help laughing. “Lee, the whole thing was perfectly simple. I was extremely fond of Miss Helen Lansdale in those days, and the trouble was simply this; you know that I am the least jealous man in the world, but there is one thing I cannot, and will not do, and that is to run opposition to a ‘cad-a-chump’ we used to call them in the old days.

“If I like a girl and see much of her—am at all devoted—I don’t care how many others there are in the game, if they are decent fellows, but, if a girl wants some counter jumper around, why—she can have him, but I withdraw.”

“You’re a proud man,” said Lee, putting down his pipe and looking his friend in the face, “and you’ll get into trouble some day. You have an aristo-

cratic contempt for those beneath you that won't do in this country."

"I've no contempt for those beneath me, but merely for those who are inferiors and assume to be equals. It's a nice state of things for a Southern gentleman to question such an attitude. You quite agree with me in practice, if not in theory. You remember Billy Cobbs; you had about the same opinion of him that I had. He got introduced to Miss Lansdale by some one or other (to go back to the original subject) after I had refused to present him. I objected to her cutting Jim Dunstan's dance to waltz with Cobbs the second time. She informed me that she would do as she pleased, and that she considered Mr. Cobbs a most charming individual. I told her in reply that he was not a man she should care to know, and incidentally added that I would leave if she cared to have anything more to do with him."

"And she told you to go," broke in Lee, with a laugh; "any girl of spirit would."

"She did and I went," replied Ayer. "Some of these days when I am in a confidential mood, I'll tell you why I feel so strongly on such a trivial subject. For that was not mere boyish fancy, but a conviction that is still as strong as ever in me."

"Tell me your story now, Ayer."

"No," said the Northerner, gloomily, as he rose up, "I am going into the library to read until we start for the Peters'."

The sun was well down when Lee and Ayer reached the Peters' place. The planter was on the veranda, and seemed delighted to see them.

"The ladies are out for a drive," said Mr. Peters, "but they will soon be back. You must dine here and spend the night—both of you. It is really shameful the way in which you have

deserted us of late, Mr. Ayer ; Clover Gwynne has been wondering what could have happened to you."

"I shall be most happy to stay to-night," replied Ayer, "especially as I may have to go North soon."

"That's a bluff," said Lee, winking at Peters. "I do not believe he will go at all. Our climate is affecting him, Peters. He is not nearly so restless as he used to be."

"Really becoming lazy, I assure you."

Dinner was ready when the ladies returned, and Ayer merely shook hands with Clover before she ran upstairs to dress. She greeted him with a frank smile, and seemed relieved and pleased to find him there.

During dinner, the conversation was of course, general, and Ayer had abundant opportunity to reflect on how foolish, not to say, rude, he had been to keep away from such a pretty girl

for an entire week. He had attributed the impression made on him by their ride, to his prolonged absence from the society of ladies, but now realized, as he watched her across the table, playfully bantering Lee about that gentleman's neglect, that something more than an ordinary *affaire*, awaited him if he saw much more of her.

"Why not," he reflected. "It is fair game and no favor. She is not unskilled and can hold her own. Besides, if she takes my attention seriously—well, that might be embarrassing—but then that has happened before, and no great harm came of it."

So after dinner, he excused himself from smoking with the men and went out on the veranda. Clover was alone. Apparently she had expected him, for she turned quickly at the sound of his step.

"I knew you would come," she said, frankly. "What do you think of me

after the other night, Mr. Ayer. I was afraid from your absence that I had lost your respect."

"Nonsense, I have been busy in town—lawyers, you know," replied the Northerner.

"I don't believe that. You're laughing at me. You know you could have come if you had wished."

"Well, I'm here now," said Ayer, "and if I had known that you cared to see me, Miss Gwynne," he added more seriously, "I should have been here long ago. You might have written a note; but come and take a stroll along the river road, so that I may smoke. Will you need anything over your head? Can't you use this shawl?" taking a white crepey thing off of a near by rocking chair.

"That's Cousin Joy's, but throw it over your arm, I may need it."

Clover Gwynne went with Ayer without the slightest hesitation. They

crossed the lawn, and in a few steps came to the road that skirted the river. This road they followed for perhaps a quarter of a mile, until they found a fallen tree conveniently near the bank. Clover ensconced herself among the upturned roots, leaving Ayer a more humble seat at her feet.

"Mr. Ayer," she began, "you must have a bad opinion of us Southern girls."

"Southern girls are very much like the Northern ones, perhaps rather nicer, Clover," said Ayer, moving closer and striving to rest his arm on her knees.

"Stop!" said Clover, firmly, but without a trace of annoyance in her voice; "if you wish to sit quietly where you are I will stay here. If you come any nearer, I shall go back to the house."

Ayer cheerfully slid back to his seat and bided his time. He drew a pipe from his pocket and proceeded to fill it. He glanced up mischievously and said,

“Do you mind a pipe—it’s a pledge of good behavior, you know?”

“If it keeps you still, smoke all you like, Mr. Ayer.”

At their feet the river made a soft monotonous sound as the waves lapped and swished against the grassy bank.

On either shore, the grass grew down to and indeed, under the water’s edge, and in the brilliant, full moonlight, it looked to the silent pair, as though it had just been newly poured from the Giver’s hand out over a fresh green meadow-land. A whip-poor-will sung his plaintive solo.

From the plantation across the moonlit water, came the sound of the deep baying hounds; probably out with the negroes on a coon-hunt.

And above and resting on it all, fell the moonlight like a veil of silver, turning into a veritable fairyland, the sylvan glade until it was a fit place only for the loves of true lovers.

Wallace understood Clover's mood and smoked on in silence. The beauty of the night brought him a strange restfulness of soul. An owl's sudden hoot in a tree near by startled Clover and aroused them both from their dreamy mood. Presently Ayer began to talk of life in the North. This was a topic of undying interest to the Georgia girl. Brought up remote from cities, she listened with intense interest to his stories of fashionable New York. The Horse Show and the smart dances, the opera and the dinners were all a dream to her, but still far more near and vivid than the Old World scenes he had heretofore dwelt upon. From society the conversation drifted to the Northern summers, and he told her of golfing and coaching in the Berkshires, gay Newport, and of the lawn parties and yachting along the seashore. Of the watering places on Mt. Desert Island, Clover already knew much from other South-

ern girls who had flourished there. Tales of life on the water never palled, and she listened while Ayer told her of canoe trips and yachting along the Maine shores, until he feared she would forget the speaker in the fascination of the subject.

Ayer never appeared to better advantage than when in a serious mood, and seeing his opportunity, he improved it to the utmost.

Several hours had passed when Ayer lit his last pipe full of tobacco, and said: "Here I've been doing all the talking, and chiefly about myself, too. Won't you tell me about your Georgia life? It would interest me much more than hearing myself talk."

"There's not much to tell," replied Clover, sitting up with a sigh. "I would much rather have you go on. This is all so new to me. Our men either can not or will not talk to us girls seriously. You have seen a great

deal, Mr. Ayer. Life must interest you deeply, to observe everything so closely. One thing, however, I don't understand, and that is, what possible reason you can have for liking a little backwood's girl like me after you have known so many society women. Why is it?"

"I have not said that I did like you, Clover"—said Ayer with a smile, which was invisible in the darkness.

"But, I know you do," said Clover, quietly.

"We must go back now," she added, after a pause.

Ayer protested that it was still quite early, but Miss Gwynne insisted. She took his arm as a matter of course, and leaned on it confidently, as they leisurely strolled back to the house. Something of her former softness came back, and her voice was low and tender. She sat on the veranda for a few minutes with him, and then rose to bid him good-night, extending her hand with a

grace that was simple and old-fashioned.

Ayer laughed and dropping, half in fun, half respectfully on one knee, pressed his lips upon it. She allowed her hand to linger for a moment in his, and her wonderful eyes lit up for an instant with an expression and fire that was not lost on Ayer, and she was gone.

After that moonlit evening by the river, Ayer simply gave himself up to Clover Gwynne; rode with her, walked with her and devoted himself exclusively to her, to the ill concealed annoyance of Mrs. Peters.

At a cotillon given by the Barrys at the Beauregard, Clover did not dance with any one else, excusing herself when Major Parker came up early in the evening for a waltz, on the ground that she was tired.

"Now," said she to Ayer, when the angry major had marched off with great dignity, "you'll have to spend the rest

of the evening outside with me. After refusing the major, I cannot dance with any one else ;" so they remained on the veranda until supper. He left her for a moment to get some ices, and on his return found Miss Barry remonstrating with her for her obvious preference for him.

"Your fine-looking friend from New York will get himself into trouble, if you don't come in and dance with some of our men," he heard Miss Barry say.

"I don't think he'll give me up for a little risk. Would you, Mr. Ayer?" said Clover with a flush of pleasure, as that gentleman came up.

Miss Barry retired discomfited.

The dance settled the question that had been agitating Wainhill for some time, and the people forthwith concluded that Ayer and Miss Gwynne were engaged—that it was an excellent match and lost further interest in the matter. All were not of this opinion, however,

as was proved by Colonel Bellows, one evening at the club.

"He's been a lovin' of her these two months," said that ancient veteran, smoothing his patriarchal beard over his vest to conceal the absence of a necktie and holding out his glass to Pete to fill from the whiskey decanter; "I've been watchin' 'em an' I sez to Parker the other day, sez I: 'thet Yankee's got his eye on Dan Gwynne's girl. Them fancy fellers up North hev got a heap of cheek. I reckon old Gwynne will be mad enough when he hears 'bout this business. He holds his head pretty high.'"

"Mr. Ayer is a gentleman," said Frazier Peters, who had joined the group as the colonel was speaking, "and even if what you surmise is correct, Colonel Bellows, Mr. Gwynne has nothing to object to that I can see."

"Well," returned the veteran, thoughtfully, "mebbe you're right, but them

Yankees is Yankees, and I don't believe in mixed marriages."

Miss Gwynne and Ayer were invited out together to dinner as a matter of course by the neighbors, and even Frazier and his wife accepted the situation and exchanged grave looks of approval when Ayer dropped in accidentally for mint julep, an event which now occurred every afternoon. Even Lee at length began to think the matter looked serious, but, as it was none of his business, he wisely said nothing.

Discussing the *affaire* one afternoon with Joy Peters on the veranda, he shifted his responsibility in the matter:

"Well, Ayer is free, white, and twenty-one; if he had wanted my advice, he would have asked for it."

CHAPTER VII.

The Moving Finger writes ; and, having writ,
Moves on : nor all your Piety nor wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all your Tears wash out a Word of it.

Omar Khyyám.

MISS GWYNNE received the North-erner's attention as a matter of course, a proper tribute from a man to a woman of beauty, as she well knew herself to be. Like many Southern women, she had been brought up to regard men's attention as a most natural and desirable thing, and, while her vanity was somewhat pleased at having taken from her cousin and kept to herself so difficult a man as Wallace Ayer, she was not overelated.

Cases of intense, sometimes half frantic devotion she had met with before, and she put her latest conquest

into this same category, although she found it at times hard to understand an undercurrent of seriousness that she had noticed at first, but which now seemed increasing. Affairs of this sort, she argued to herself, occurred every summer, and it mattered little what the pace was, for the time was short, and although Ayer kept putting off his departure from day to day, she knew that a few weeks at the most would separate them. When she thought of going back to her quiet Georgia life, she did feel a pang of loneliness at the idea, and frankly told Ayer so. That gentleman seemed even less concerned about the future. Enjoying the present, he failed to see any reason why things should not stay as they were. The idea of marrying Clover had not entered his mind, he simply knew that he was fond of her, was becoming more and more so every day, and had entire possession of the field.

Previous experience would have told him, had he troubled himself to look back into his own short but crowded life, that the pace they were going could not last.

He had often told Clover that he was fond of her and had freely used the most endearing terms with a smile which robbed them of half their meaning, but the words: "I love you"; he had avoided from some fantastic principle he still retained, despite his many peccadillos, hidden away in a corner of his brain.

Once, however, he had used it. On the night of the Barrys' dance he had driven home with her. The delicate odor of the roses she wore—the white feather boa wound about her throat—the excitement of the dance still tingling in his blood, had all proved too much for him and had thrown him off his guard, and he had whispered in her

ear the words he had so carefully shunned.

"Never use those words again, Wallace," she said, "unless you mean them with all your soul. Don't trifle, or you will ruin our friendship. Don't be sentimental, and behave for just a little longer and then I'll be home in Georgia."

For a moment Ayer would have been willing to repeat what he said and stand by it, but, perhaps, the little unrecognized doubt that has saved many a man at a vital crisis, came to his rescue. Be that as it may, the subject dropped and so matters drifted on. Little by little Miss Gwynne entered deeper into Ayer's life, and he never knew how much he really cared for the girl until he was rudely awakened from his day dream.

One afternoon as the summer season was drawing to its close, Ayer started on horseback for the Peters' place, to keep an engagement with Miss Gwynne.

It was at least an hour before he need start, but he had been impatient all the morning to be up and away.

All his purchases of timberland had been completed and nothing now detained him in Wainhill. Letters from home that day had brought to mind the gaieties he was missing in the North—the hunting season was approaching and here he was, lingering and wasting his time in the mountains. He stopped at the Long Bridge to draw tighter the girth of his saddle. The horse was restive and it seemed to him as he pulled tight the strap, that he was bracing himself to leave Clover.

At the end of the bridge he passed a crossroad, that came from the rear of the Peters' plantation. On this road he saw a buggy with a man and woman in it. They were too far away to distinguish their features, but the idea occurred to him that the girl looked a trifle like Clover Gwynne.

He persuaded himself that it was only a fancy, however, and riding on without looking back he soon disappeared from the view of the occupants of the buggy, whoever they were. He was in high spirits, and ran his horse unmercifully over the soft road in pure excess of vitality. The air was getting cooler, with a foretaste of Indian Summer, and his blood tingled with the mere joy of existence. It was in his finest and happiest mood that he drew rein on his horse and cantered slowly up the sward toward the house.

On the veranda he found Clover's maid, who seemed to be very busy—about nothing at all, as it occurred to him afterward—to his intense surprise, she informed him that:

“Miss Gwynne had gone out, leaving no word behind; Mrs. Peters was not well and was lying down, Mr. Peters was at the stable.”

Somewhat perplexed at this very un-

usual proceeding on the part of Clover, he led his horse to the stable. Clover had never before broken an engagement with him—a virtue he had admired in her the more, as it was so rare in other women. No one could be found at the stable except the small 'Lish, who emerged from the oat bin when he heard Ayer's voice. 'Lish had profited much of late from the Northerner's generosity and was his most devoted admirer.

Ayer told him to give his horse some water when he was cool and blanket him until he returned. He then inquired where Mr. Peters was.

"I don' 'no', Marse Ayer fo' shur; I'se 'spects he dun gone huntin'."

As Ayer turned to leave the stable, he noticed Miss Gwynne's horse standing quietly in the stall.

"'Lish," said he, "didn't Miss Gwynne ride to-day?"

"No, Marse Ayer, she dun' druv in a buggy," 'Lish replied.

The buggy seen at the bridge crossing flashed back on Ayer's mind.

"Whom did she go with, 'Lish," he asked; "was it not Mr. Peters?"

'Lish's big eyes rolled over toward the oat bin. He hitched up one trouser leg and glanced furtively toward the stable door. 'Lish scented trouble in the air. He seemed to hesitate between the two places, which one to select for safety.

Ayer flung him a quarter:

"Here, here boy, speak up," his voice husky with nervous impatience.

"Miss Gwynne dun gone with Marse Harvey White."

"Who is Harvey White?"

"Dunno."

"When did you first see him around here?"

"Las' night, he come from Marse Parker's place an' he staid pretty late, when—"

'Lish was about to proceed when

Ayer stopped him, and straightening himself up, he said :

“That is sufficient. Just tell Miss Gwynne that I called for her. Bring out my horse again.”

As he rode away 'Lish laid his newly-acquired money on the barn floor, danced a coon-jine on it, and finished up the hilarious celebration by turning a handspring, catching up the coin as he went over, a trick of which he was very proud.

Ayer was surprised to find how much annoyed he was at having his appointment broken in such an unceremonious manner, and for a stranger, of whom he had never heard.

“Still this White may be kin of hers. They are all related down here,” he reflected.

At all events he himself had no claim on her, no right to her time, and yet—he did not like sharing with another.

“Who is Harvey White?” asked

Ayer, as he strolled with Lee through the village street that evening.

"He is a 'Billy Cobbs,' the sort of cad you were talking about the other day." Something seemed to be wrong with Lee's pipe. It engaged all his attention.

"Where is he from, Lee?"

"Oh, he's from Raleigh, this state—I have met him only once and did not like him."

Lee resumed with an awkward assumption of indifference. "He is a fair sample of the New South, wealthy, uneducated and of very plain origin. You won't care for him. But how did you hear of him? Is he in town?" and Lee looked at Ayer curiously.

"So I understand," said Ayer, briefly, "but I have not seen him."

The men smoked on in silence. Lee glanced at his companion now and then, as though he would divine his moody thoughts. Lee was discreet, however,

and concluded not to force an unwilling confidence.

Presently Ayer aroused himself as one awakening from a trance.

“Heigh oh! the lights of the village are going out. It must be about time we were retracing our tracks.” And knocking the long dead ashes from his pipe, they started toward the club at a livelier pace, through the balmy darkness of the soft summer’s night.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Loaf of Bread beneath the Bough,
A Flask of Wine, a Book of Verse—and Thou
Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
Oh! Wilderness were Paradise enow :

Omar Khayyám.

I would rather be near to you, sweet,
Than to win an immortal name.
I would rather be dear to you, sweet,
Than to leave an undying fame
In the minds of a mighty throng, sweet.
For man's memory fades away,
And there's nothing that lasts so long, sweet,
As the love of a summer day.

John Bennett.

THE next morning Ayer received a note which read as follows :

“PETERSDALE.

“DEAR MR. AYER :

“I was so sorry to have missed your call yesterday. I reached the house not ten minutes after you had

gone. You might have waited for me. Joy wishes me to ask you to lunch with us to-day.

“We shall expect you at one.

“Hastily and sincerely,

“*Wednesday.* CLOVER GWYNNE.”

Ayer, with a light heart, ordered out his horse after reading the note, and rode over to the Peters'. Miss Gwynne came down in her riding habit and shook hands cordially. She made no explanation of her absence of the day before, calmly leaving on him the blame for coming too early and not waiting for her. At lunch, as she was very vivacious and in the highest spirits, he soon forgot his annoyance. Naturally good-natured, Ayer either readily forgave a slight or resented it on the spot. As Miss Gwynne was in her riding habit and as he had ridden every day for several weeks with her, he naturally assumed that she was going with him that afternoon. He was surprised, when just

as they were finishing lunch, a knocking on the front door summoned the butler, who came back a few moments later and whispered a few words to Miss Gwynne.

"Tell Mr. White," said she, quickly, "that I am quite ready, and send word to John in the stable to bring up my horse."

"Good afternoon, Mr. Ayer," she said, rising and going to the door, "I hope I shall find you here on my return; I'm going for a canter out toward Pine Ridge."

Ayer realized the situation as she was speaking and it flashed over him that he had remained too long in Wainhill. He looked her fixedly in the eyes as he sipped his coffee. She returned his look smilingly for a moment, and then with a trace of hauteur abruptly left the room.

His first impulse was to follow and remonstrate with her, but the uselessness of such a course quickly deterred

him. Then after chatting about indifferent matters with Peters for some time, it seemed to him that as Mrs. Peters had left them and Frazier had apparently not noticed anything unusual in Miss Gwynne's actions, he could say good-bye to his host then and there, pleading business in the North, ride back to the club, pack up and leave the next morning.

Miss Gwynne would be apprised of his sudden departure by note.

To have left Wainhill that day, however, required more wisdom and caution than Wallace Ayer possessed.

Nevertheless he came near acting on the idea, at least so far as to leave Petersdale, when Lee unexpectedly arrived.

Surprised at finding Ayer alone with Frazier Peters, and Miss Gwynne nowhere to be seen, he demanded the reason.

"Clover's gone out to ride with Harvey White," answered Peters. "Sit

100 Juleps and Clover

down. She can't be out much longer. It's nearly time for dinner," and the kind-hearted Southerner, to relieve the situation, rang for some more mint julep, his panacea for all earthly ills.

Lee looked at Ayer and gave a long, soft whistle.

That whistle settled Ayer. All his stern Northern blood surged up in his veins, and he determined to see the game through to the end. No thought of retiring from the field occurred to him again, and in its place was a fixed plan to punish Clover Gwynne for the slight she had put upon him.

When toward evening laughing voices in the distance announced the approach of the riders, Ayer was still there, smoking quietly. His face was a trifle paler, but his manner as he shook hands with Mr. White whom Clover presented to him, was entirely free from any trace of annoyance, and nothing showed the struggle he had passed through.

Once as he looked at Clover, she caught a dangerous glint in his eyes that seemed for a second stern and cruel. Clover shuddered involuntarily, and looked again. She must have been mistaken—nothing but kindness was to be seen there.

White proved to be a large and rather fine looking man, though there was something about his bearing that told Ayer's trained instinct that his claim to the title of gentleman, had not been unquestioned.

Mr. White did not stay long and was not invited to dinner by Mr. Peters; although he evidently expected it, Mr. Peters quietly remained standing, keeping the others on their feet also, until White found it advisable to leave. He had a moment's conversation aside with Miss Gwynne, and waving his hand familiarly to the group on the porch, he mounted and rode away. Lee had taken no trouble to conceal his dislike,

and the Peters appeared to feel but little regret at the departure of Mr. White.

That evening the dinner passed off pleasantly, and Ayer found no difficulty in securing an interview with Clover at its close.

As he joined her on the veranda, Clover leaned against the railing and facing him, said:

"I see that you are annoyed at something, Mr. Ayer. What it is, I cannot imagine, as you usually are such an indifferent person. What can possibly have gone wrong? Are your lawyers still troubling you?"

"Not at all," replied Ayer, slowly, "my business in Wainhill is finished, and I rode out here to tell you that I was thinking of leaving the South for good."

He watched the expression of her face as he said this, but if he expected any show of feeling at the announce-

ment of his departure he was disappointed. She did seem sorry, but no stronger emotion was visible to his eyes.

"What, going? Oh, I'm so sorry. We shall miss you a great deal, Mr. Ayer; I shall be lonely down here."

"Is that all you have to say, Clover? I did hope that my departure might interest you more."

"Why, yes—I'm sorry, I tell you," said Miss Gwynne, with a laugh. "What more do you wish me to say? Would you like to have me weep copiously and entreat you to stay?"

"No, you're too cold for any such demonstration as that—but seriously, Clover, I for one am heartily sorry to leave you. I've grown fond of you in these last two months and you know it."

"Just as seriously then, Mr. Ayer, I too, am heartily sorry to have you go," said Clover, laughing at his earnestness, "but I don't see why you should

care. You came down here on business—amused yourself a little with me and amused me a great deal with you;—and now you go North, probably never to return to this country again, and you wonder why I don't feel as you pretend you do."

"There is no pretense about it," interrupted Ayer, now thoroughly aroused, "I wish"—

"You can go back to Lenox," continued Clover, without noticing the interruption, "and in a week you will be devoting yourself to some Northern girl—not so informal and affectionate as I have been, but much more stylish and suitable for the debonair Mr. Ayer. Hue! In ten days I shall be forgotten."

"Clover," said the Northerner, "I shall not forget you. I shall always remember you as the most beautiful and heartless woman I have known. I did think you cared for me somewhat," and his voice trembled.

"I never said so," replied the girl, quietly, using Mr. Ayer's own words.

"But you acted so," said Ayer.

Clover sat on the vine hung railing and looked out into the night beyond without answering. The light from the hall lamp fell on her face, softly illumining her features and hair. Ayer was surprised at the change of expression he saw creeping over her. The old tenderness was back again, when she turned once more to look at him, saying:

"Mr. Ayer, why should I trust you? I know little of men, but something tells me you are trifling with me."

"Trifling with you, Clover? I may have been more or less of a trifler in my life, but I am honest when I tell you that I mean just what I say. Clover, I do love you with all the strength of a strong man's soul. If you look me in the face you will believe," and he took her hand and turned her toward him.

Clover smiled and looked at him archly for a moment, then back into the night and murmured :

“If I only could trust you, but I am almost afraid to love you.”

“What can I do to convince you of my sincerity,” said Ayer, with increasing earnestness. “Name anything.”

“How like a man!” replied Clover jestingly, “they always want to do something. You might swim the Manola again; although that would not be much of a test, as you did it once for the sake of a mint julep. No, Wallace,” she added, gently, “we would better leave matters as they are. I should be out of place in New York and you would find life monotonous on a plantation.”

“You would carry New York by storm, Clover, with your beauty and your sweet ingenuous manners.” He paused—“I cannot be eloquent in these matters, I simply appeal to you.

Will you marry me? No? Then say you cannot love me, but not that you cannot trust me. Clover, answer me."

She glanced at him shyly for a second, and then with a half convulsive gasp, she stood up near to him, and said:

"Wallace, I will not say that I cannot love you, for I have loved you from the day we met, and now I will trust you."

Wallace Ayer was never able to recall with any clearness the rest of that interview—his new found happiness seemed to overwhelm his senses. After the mortification of the afternoon, the contrast seemed all the greater. Looking back in after days on that evening of perfect happiness—as he crouched before the camp-fire or toiled through the dreary snow clad wastes of the far North,—in a ballroom with the scent of roses he would seem to be again on that moonlit veranda with a girl in white. Sometimes it seemed to him an

hallucination—a phantom sent to mock his heart desolation, or again, he would start up from his blankets in the frozen night, with strange noises in his ears—a strange burning at his brow, and glancing at the motionless form of his companion, and the stars, scarce more distant than the pine tops, he would murmur, “but it was worth all—all. No matter what happens now, the remembrance still is mine.”

* * * * *

It was in absolute peace and content that he sought out Lee's room late that night after leaving Miss Gwynne, and aroused him.

Lee felt that something serious had happened to make Ayer wake him at that unholy hour, and was much relieved when a light was struck and he saw how cheerful his friend looked.

“Congratulate me, Howard,” said Ayer, sitting down on the edge of the

bed. "I'm engaged to Clover Gwynne. I have her permission to tell you, but it is to be a secret to all others, until her father is informed. Shake, old man."

"Engaged?" repeated Lee, "engaged?" sitting up in bed with a start and ignoring the proffered hand of his friend. "Are you crazy—engaged?—you, Wallace Ayer, engaged to Clover Gwynne? Impossible."

"Crazy! impossible! what do you mean? It is you, Howard, that is crazy. Why don't you congratulate me?"

Lee gazed at his friend for a moment, sadly, and then said, "It's all my fault. What an ass I have been. I never supposed you were in earnest. Yes, I suppose I congratulate you. Are you going to be married?"

"Lee, I don't understand your conduct," said Ayer, with growing annoyance, "you talk strangely. As to the wedding, nothing is settled except that

you are to be best man. What is the meaning of all this? I demand to know what you mean."

"Do not demand, or I shall say nothing," replied Lee, getting out of bed. "Come, Wallace, old man, we are too good friends to quarrel over words, or anything else. This is a serious matter. Can you talk rationally for a moment and listen to me, who can tell you things that no other being could mention in your presence?"

"You are obscure in your language, Lee, but pardon me for what I said. I'm so happy to-night, and I rushed to you to receive your congratulations, and you have nothing for me except long faces."

"Wallace," said the Southerner, "listen to me patiently for a moment. You must not marry this girl.

"Do you remember telling me of a friend that married a woman you knew,

in blissful ignorance of her past, and there was not a man dared breathe a word to her fiancé, and how you all laughed as he marched proudly down the aisle with her hanging coyly on his arm? You said his very coat must have laughed in its sleeve. Now, I am not going to be as cowardly as you men were on that occasion and I—why, what's the matter?"

Ayer had risen to his full height, and clutching the back of his chair with a grasp that left his fingers white and bloodless, he said hoarsely and slowly, emphasizing each word :

"Howard Lee, you are my best friend, and you know me. Never as long as you live breathe a word of this to me. I know what you mean and am thank-you have not said it, or else we could never speak again."

His eyes became bloodshot, and with a tremendous effort he mastered himself

and continued in the same strained voice:

"Past! Miss Gwynne is too young to have a past. Believe it—I will not believe it; no, never. She is as artless as a weed. Hers is absolutely the purest soul I have ever been permitted to gaze into. Why, Howard, my whole life has changed its course. With her love to strengthen me I feel strong to battle with all the world to conquer it. A past? Clover has the fresh guilelessness of a child, combined with the half-awakened reserve of the spring-time of dawning womanhood." Ayer ceased to speak, his voice having fallen to a hoarse whisper because of overpowering emotion.

Lee, when he saw Ayer quivering with excitement, had anticipated violence, but when he perceived the Northerner's self-control, he touched him gently on the arm.

"Ayer," said he, "I ask your

pardon. I was honest in my belief when I spoke, but, if you do not believe it, I shall not. Can you forgive me? It would be impossible for any one else to do so, but I know you will."

Ayer looked up, and his face was calm and set. He took Lee's proffered hand and wrung it.

"I do forgive you, Howard, with my whole heart, and you must do the same for me if I was hasty in words. We Saxons are not given to demonstrations, but let acts speak. I may need a friend some day."

"You'll never find me wanting," replied the Southerner, returning Ayer's grasp with interest.

Little thinking of the truth of the words he spoke, Howard Lee stood there in the dim light of the flickering candle, a magnificent specimen of the Southerner. His clear cut features and proud bearing showed how much blood he owed to Norman ancestors, and his

black curly hair, clustered about his temples, gave him an almost boyish look. Quick to respond to generous impulses, he still had much of the stability of his Northern friend, although his physique was cast in a smaller mould.

Ayer resembled the Southerner closely in many points, and had much the same sympathy with all that was chivalrous and brave, but he had lived in a more practical and workaday world, and his good sense seldom left him. Strongly made, with strong features and light brown hair, his eyes were piercing and keen, and he had a quiet ease of manner rare among his restless countrymen.

CHAPTER IX.

Oh Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake :
For all the Sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give—and take.

Omar Khayyám.

AT breakfast, the next day, Clover was radiantly beautiful, and seemed so superlatively happy, that Mrs. Peters looked at her sharply and exchanged a significant glance with her husband, and even Lee put a trifle more pressure into shaking her hand than usual by way of silent congratulation.

It was necessary for Ayer to return to town that morning and arrange his affairs for a prolonged stay in the South, where, as far as any of his plans were fixed, he now meant to settle. Miss Gwynne objected strongly to his leaving her on the first day of their en-

gagement, but when he reminded her that she too ought to write her family and get her father's consent, she reluctantly yielded on condition that he should be on hand promptly at seven for dinner. This he promised to do and the horses were sent for.

On reaching the club, Ayer tried to apply his mind to business and catch up with his correspondence, but his thoughts were elsewhere, and after several attempts to work he threw down his pen and called Lee, who was reading in the adjoining room.

"Lee, I can't work to-day. I'm too restless. Will you take a good stiff ride with me, after we have had some lunch?"

Lee laid down his book and joined Ayer. "I thought you would not stick very long at your letters, to-day," said he. "Yes, I feel like having a good run," and he rang the bell for Pete, to consult in reference to luncheon.

The meal was quickly served and disposed of, and the horses brought out. The two friends seemed to feel that perhaps this was their last day together in the old way, and Lee, especially, was very blue over the coming separation.

They raced and ran their horses throughout the long afternoon, until about four o'clock they found themselves near the top of Pine Ridge, a low mountain about three miles from Petersdale. The country between was hilly and sloped gently toward the Manola.

After a particularly sharp run, which brought them almost to the crest of the ridge, Ayer noticed a slight limp in his horse's near forefoot, and on dismounting, he found that the animal had cast a shoe. Here was a pleasant predicament. The bridle path they were on led them a good ten miles, before coming out at the Peters', and the road was covered with loose stones, which

were almost certain to cut the animal's unprotected hoof.

"You certainly are an unlucky horseman," said Lee. "The only thing you can do now, is to walk home and lead your horse, and that will make you late for dinner. Imagine Miss Gwynne's despair on your not appearing. Come to think of it, though, you can let me lead your horse back at leisure, and you can make a cross cut through the woods."

"That's a capital idea, Lee," said Ayer. "Peters' must be in this direction," pointing westward.

"Yes," said Lee, riding a few yards ahead.

"Come over here, can you see from here, that gully? There is a small stream that starts in it, a little below here, and flows almost directly to the Peters'. It runs into the Manola just above the stables. Follow that and you cannot lose your way."

Lee took the horse and soon disappeared down the winding road. Ayer watched him out of sight and then started toward the gully.

A little hard climbing brought him to the spring that Lee had described. He leaned over and took a drink from the clear, cold water where it sprang from its underground sources, and then strolled leisurely along, keeping within sight or hearing of the running water. A mile or two brought him to a ravine where the brook, now swollen to a respectable stream, poured down through the stones with a bustle and noise out of all proportion to its size.

Ayer climbed a neighboring rock and saw that he was within easy distance of the buildings on Peters' place. Glancing at his watch he found it was only five o'clock. "Plenty of time," thought he to himself, "I'll find a cool place by the brook and rest a bit."

So he returned to the stream and

picked his way slowly over the moss-covered rocks. A little lower the brook broadened into a deep, clear pool near the edge of the gorge. Beyond this it emerged into a bushy undergrowth tract of land, and then through pastures ran into the Manola.

The flash of a trout caught Ayer's eye as he came to the pool, and, after watching for a moment to see the fish appear again, he sought out a convenient seat between two rocks, unconsciously concealing himself behind the one on the lower side.

The place and its surroundings reminded him of his own Northern woods. The clear trout stream and moss-grown rocks, the pines and hanging ivy recalled many a stream where he had fished, in his boyhood. All this was past now, he thought to himself, a sober married life awaited him in the future ; no more wanderings ; no more lonely hunts in the forests he loved so well ; no more

reckless riding across country; his life was of value now; no more flirtations—no certainly, no more of them. His thoughts turned to sweet Clover.

“It must be time to start for the house, if I am to dress for dinner,” he thought, but he did not stir. The sun was sinking and the shadows lengthening. The trout began to come out from their hiding places under the bank, and to snap eagerly at stray flies floating down the current. A squirrel scampered on the rock opposite. It had seen Ayer, and at first, inspected him with fierce chattering, and had ventured slowly near him and then dashed back in feigned alarm, but the little animal soon concluded the silent figure was harmless and did not deign to take further notice of it. It had been scampering in and out through the last rays of the sun, when suddenly it sat up and, switching its tail, began to scold furiously.

Ayer was too good a woodsman not to know from the squirrel's behavior, that it had perceived something approaching. He lay still and crouched lower, hoping to see some wild woodland creature come to the pool for its evening drink; perhaps some stray fox or wild-cat might venture from the wood, or, more probably a deer might stray along the brook. To his surprise a moment later he heard voices.

The speakers came rapidly nearer, and then emerged from the bushes below, and sat down on a fallen tree at the outlet of the pool, not twenty feet away from where Ayer lay.

Ayer recognized the voices of Clover Gwynne and Harvey White.

"You still have a little time to talk, Clover, before you must go back. Sit down on this tree;" Ayer heard White say. "So you're really going to marry this Yankee. Well, well, it's a good

joke. When did you bring him to time?"

"Only last night," replied Miss Gwynne, "I do not see any joke about it. Now that it's over, I am glad I did it. I rather like my Northerner," she added, caressingly.

"Oh! I reckon he'll do. He seems to be very much in earnest. Let me give you a piece of advice, Clover. Be careful how you arouse him. I am inclined to think," White added, "that he will prove your master in a very short time. But tell me, why do you want to actually marry him?"

"I really don't know," replied Clover, "perhaps I shall change my mind before we are married, but I don't think I shall—this time. He has plenty of money and can give me any position I want in New York. I'm tired of living down here in the backwoods," and after a moment, she resumed, "besides, I shall get away from you, Harvey."

"After all these years, I reckon not," replied Mr. White, with a laugh. "I calculate to go North myself next winter. I'll have your husband put me up at the clubs and introduce me to society."

"He won't do it," replied Clover, quietly.

"Why not?"

"I won't let him."

"You will not let him? you will see that he does it," replied the man.

Clover was silent for a few moments, and then said:

"I think I shall go back now."

"Not yet," said White, "come sit down again, nearer, so. I'm not through yet. You have not told me the true reasons why you are going to marry this man Ayer."

"Well, if you must hear the truth again," replied the girl, desperately; "as you know already, my father with his old time pride of family will not

hear to my marrying you, and on the other hand, you are too proud to marry me without full recognition, even if I were to consent to defy my family. Besides, I am not going to allow myself to be under your influence any longer.

"Harvey," she added, more gently, "you know I have always cared for you and I always shall. You will think more of me, Harvey, when you have lost me."

"Lost you. I told you, Clover, that I had no intention of losing you. What difference does it make to me whether you are married or not?"

"Harvey White, I do not think you have a particle of honor in you, or you would not talk so to me when I am trying to do the right thing;" and after a moment's pause, Clover said, without emotion:

"You're a brute."

White merely repeated his cynical laugh and answered:

"Go on, call me any name you like, my sweet girl. You look all the prettier when you get angry. So you call it doing the right thing to marry another man just because I won't truckle to these tide water aristocrats. Perhaps you'll go to this Ayer with some romance about my persecuting you, when you are married and try to arouse his Yankee blood to call me out, eh?" and White laughed again at the idea of a Northerner having blood enough for such extreme measures.

"Perhaps he might come out if you tried him," said Miss Gwynne. "At any rate, Harvey, I must go now or there will be another scene after dinner. I think Mr. Ayer was a little jealous of my riding with you the other day," she said, coquettishly.

"All right," replied White, "perhaps you had better start back now. It is understood then that you are to meet me to-morrow at four by this pool. It

may be the last time that I shall see you for months."

"Yes," said Clover, "I suppose I shall be here; but do go now. You must not come down to the house, as Howard Lee is there and he is not so infatuated and blind as my Northerner."

"Very well, Clover," said White, with a sort of rough tenderness in his voice; "I shall keep out of the way until you are married. I am sorry to let you go back alone, for it is getting late, but your fine friend may come looking for you in this direction, and I should hate to have to hurt him, now you are so very fond of him. Good-night, little girl. Good-night," and White held her close as she held up her fresh young lips for his passionate kiss. Ayer heard the bushes crack as the Carolinian disappeared.

Clover Gwynne apparently had not stirred.

The sound of White's footsteps grew less and less, and finally all was silent, Ayer became conscious that night had fallen unobserved during this interview. The trees and rocks across the pool were shadowy and indistinct in the growing darkness. "So," he thought, "this was what Lee,—good slow-going conscientious faithful Lee,—attempted to tell last night and came near being brained for his courage."

He raised himself noiselessly to his feet.

He was stiff and cramped from lying motionless for so long a time. Clover's figure could be seen outlined against the bushes and without a sound, he folded his arms and looked at her, summoning all his self-restraint.

"Clover Gwynne," he said, slowly, suppressing any signs of anger in his voice. The girl sprang from the rock as though a snake had stung her, too startled even to scream. She could

not see more than a dim figure, as he stood in the deep shadow of the rocks.

"Miss Clover Gwynne," he repeated, slowly, "I am Wallace Ayer, whom you promised less than four and twenty hours ago to love and marry.

"Don't run," he added, fiercely, as he detected a motion on the girl's part, "You have nothing to fear from me. I shall not touch you, if you remain quiet and listen to what I have to say. If you run I shall bring you back."

"Oh, Wallace," cried Clover, in an agony of despair, "don't talk to me like that, you don't understand. Let me tell you"—and she took a step toward him.

"You need come no nearer, Miss Gwynne," said Ayer, coldly, with biting contempt in his words:

"Pray be seated. I have much to say."

Clover Gwynne sank back on the moss-grown rock, and buried her face

in her hands, completely overawed by the man's terrible calm.

"I came here by accident, Miss Gwynne, and sat down by this pool to think of you. This was the first day that I had loved a woman. I don't think that I have been worse than my fellow-men, but I suppose I have done my share toward making it impossible for other men to find innocence and purity. I have done enough damage, God knows, to richly deserve this punishment. Women of all kinds, have I known, good and bad, high and low, but never until this day did I think that a face like yours could hide a heart so false. I have heard all—all I tell you," his voice wavering with suppressed emotion.

"Is such your boasted Southern honor? No! There are men who are as brave and honorable here as elsewhere, and I believe that here too are

women whose lives are not a lie. But you are not among them.

"I would not have cared for any fault of yours if you had not said you loved me. All else I could forgive—that never"—Clover seemed to shrivel and whiten as does a bit of paper when consumed by red-hot coals. He paused for a moment, and then as speaking more to himself than her, he continued:

"I shall leave you to yourself. Your friend shall answer for you. I understand that he is the best shot in Carolina—so much the better."

He stopped abruptly, and there was silence by the pool, unbroken, save by the sobs from where Clover Gwynne now lay upon her face.

Ayer sat for some time buried in thought. Then he slowly rose and strode to Clover's side. He leaned over her, and picking her up roughly, placed her on her feet, saying in a harsh tone:

"Come back to the house with me now."

"I want to be alone. Leave me," the girl sobbed, sinking back on the ground.

"Come, Miss Gwynne, I tell you come. You obey Mr. White readily enough—perhaps you will find it convenient to obey me for a few moments," he said sternly.

The girl silently rose and followed him as he led the way down the dim path that ran from the pool to the farm. Just before they came to the house they passed a small summer-house. Here Ayer paused, and taking his companion by the arm, he entered it.

"A few words more before we part, Miss Gwynne. I have no ill will toward you, now that the first heat of my anger is gone, and I hope this evening's work will not wreck your life as it has mine.

"The next time an honest man and a gentleman offers you his love, take it and be as happy as you can. You have ruined my faith in women, but you are young and have much to live for. This need only be a warning to you. You will have no further trouble from White in the future. I will answer for that.

"When we reach the house you will go to your room—you have a headache—you understand. I shall attend to the other excuses. Lee and I leave for the North very shortly and I shall not cross your path again and now—good-bye: what! have you nothing to say?"

Ayer paused for a moment to await her reply, and then turning his back on the girl he had loved so passionately, left the place.

Upon mounting the steps of the veranda, Ayer found Mrs. Peters with her husband and Lee just coming from dinner. In a few words he declined Peters' offer to have dinner served

again, and told that gentleman that he feared he would have to leave for the North very suddenly and might not see them again.

"I cannot tell you, Mrs. Peters," said he, turning to that astonished lady, "how much I feel indebted to you for the glimpse of Southern life I have enjoyed under your roof and it is quite useless to try and express my thanks. Good-bye," he continued, shaking hands. "I have said good-bye to Miss Gwynne and explained to her the reasons for my departure, which probably seems so strange to you; good-bye, Peters," and he left abruptly for the stable, followed by Lee, dazed with amazement.

The two friends rode some distance without speaking—Ayer being wrapped in the gloomiest of thoughts. Every inch of the road they were passing over, brought up some association with Clover Gwynne.

Lee had far too much tact not to await his friend's own time to speak. From the little he had seen of Ayer's face, and from the obvious effort he had shown in speaking to the Peters, Lee knew that some catastrophe had occurred of sufficient moment to cause the engagement to be broken. The Northerner's features had been white and drawn, but his eyes had gleamed fiercely when the light from the stable lamps fell on them. At length Ayer turned in his saddle and speaking quickly and without visible emotion, he told Lee the events of the afternoon, repeating the conversation he had overheard and his own talk with Miss Gwynne. He stated only the facts as they occurred, without comment.

As Ayer finished his story of treachery, Lee drew his horse closer to his friend's, and clasped Ayer's hand in a grip that would have wrung a cry

from a Stoic, but which brought no response from Ayer, in whom mental suffering had left no room for physical pain. Something of Ayer's calm was caught by the Southerner, whose first impulse was to ride to Parker's plantation and settle with White, then and there. He waited a moment for any suggestion from Ayer and then said:

"Do you suppose that man will keep his date to-morrow, or will he be warned of what has happened?"

"I left Miss Gwynne in a condition from which she will not recover in time to think of White. The girl is not really bad and I think she is a trifle broken up over this little affair."

After a moment's reflection, Ayer said:

"No, Miss Gwynne won't warn him."

CHAPTER X.

“Alike for those who for TO-DAY prepare
And those that after a TO-MORROW stare
A Muezzin from the Tower of Darkness cries
Fools! your Reward is neither Here nor There!”

Omar Khayyám.

THE next afternoon at four found Mr. White on a rock at the outlet of the trout pool, where he had left Miss Gwynne the preceding day. He was tapping his riding boot with his whip and whistling softly to himself. The world had gone well with him. Brought up in poverty and obscurity, Harvey White had suddenly become one of the richest men in his state by his father's unexpected discovery of coal in land he owned in Tennessee.

Harvey White endeavored to make up for lost years and to acquire the

rudiments of an education. He had partially succeeded in so doing when his father died, leaving to his two sons, Harvey and Richard, his great wealth. Harvey thereupon became ambitious to figure in society, and to be classed among the aristocracy of the South. He had not as yet found much encouragement, but he had no end of energy and push, and as his sensibilities were not delicate, most of the rebuffs he had met, served only to strengthen his resolve to force an entrance on his own terms.

He was figuring to himself a future bright with social and political triumphs as he sat by the pool ; and so absorbed was he in his day dreams that he did not notice footfalls, and only when his eyes, fixed abstractedly on the mirror of the water, saw a stern, pale face reflected in it, that he became conscious of the presence of another. He looked up quickly and saw Wallace Ayer re-

garding him fixedly across the narrow stream.

"Why, Ayer, how are you? You gave me quite a start," White called out, pleasantly, at the same time glancing around to see whether Miss Gwynne was anywhere in sight. "Clover will hear our voices if I talk loudly," he thought, "and she is clever enough to keep hidden."

"How did you wander up here, Mr. Ayer," he added, in stentorian tones.

"You need not yell so," suggested the Northerner, "I can hear quite plainly without so much effort on your part. She," he added, significantly, "will not be here."

At this reference, White arose and his face lost its bland politeness and began to cloud darkly as he caught the other's meaning.

"She," he cried, "what 'she' do you mean, sir?"

"Do I understand you to intimate,

sir, that I am waiting for any one? If so, what are you doing prowling around here?"

"You know perfectly well what I mean," replied Ayer in a deliberate, measured voice; "I came 'prowling around' to find you."

"Well," said White, with a sneer, and drawing his body to its full height, "now you have found me, what do you propose to do with me?"

"Shoot you," replied Ayer, quietly folding his arms across his chest.

"Oh, ho! that's your game, is it? Very well, if there is any shooting to be done, I think I'll take a hand in it," and watching carefully for a sudden movement on Ayer's part, he instantaneously drew a revolver from his own pocket and leveled it at his antagonist's forehead.

Ayer did not move a muscle, but fixed his eyes, glittering with hate, on White and stood motionless. The

afternoon sun glinted lacy shadows down through the breeze-ruffled leaves on the smooth surface of the pool.

The bushy-tailed squirrel perked his inquisitive little brown nose up over a mossy tree root. Seeing the two motionless human figures, he drew back an instant, chattering the while to an unseen companion from whom he evidently gained courage, for, making a flying leap over the tree root, he startled a water-rat, who plunged head foremost into the pool, splashing a fine spray of water on White's boots and trousers.

He shuddered and lowered the pistol.

"You see your mistake, do you not, my fine Yankee? It won't do for dudes from the North to threaten a Southern gentleman."

"Yes," replied Ayer, "I did make a mistake if I classed you for a moment, among Southern gentlemen. We make a distinction, in the North at least, between gentlemen and assassins."

White bit his lip at this taunt, and for a second his finger tightened on the trigger.

"It was you that threatened to shoot, I only acted in self-defence."

"And I shall do as I said," said Ayer, contemptuously. "If I had chosen to shoot in the manner you seem to consider proper for a gentleman, I should have done so before you knew of my presence. You call yourself a Southern gentleman. Very well. In the lot below here at daybreak to-morrow, I shall give you an opportunity to prove your assertion.

"You understand me, I trust, Mr. White?"

"Perfectly," replied White, returning his pistol to his pocket, "the time and place suit me. Any other details my friend Mr. Parker will attend to. Good-day, Mr. Ayer."

Ayer bowed formally and turning his back on the pool strode to where his

horse was tied. As he galloped his horse past the Peters' house, he thought he recognized a figure at the window in the ivy covered corner where Miss Gwynne had her room. He turned slightly in the saddle away from the house, and dug his spurs so deeply into his horse that the animal plunged furiously down the road.

CHAPTER XI.

And fear not lest Existence closing your
Account, and mine, should know the like no more ;
The Eternal Saki from that Bowl has pour'd
Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.

Omar Khayyám.

ON the following morning, three men were driving slowly over the Long Bridge in a buggy. Lee held the reins and between him and Wallace Ayer, sat Dr. Mason, the surgeon, a friend of Lee's, carrying on his knees a satchel of instruments and bandages. The doctor was puffing a cigar and enjoying the sharp morning air, as though there never had been bloodshed in the world before, nor would be again.

Ayer sat back in the narrow seat absorbed in many thoughts, asking himself again and again the awkward ques-

tion: "Was it right to throw away his own life, or to take that of another on a mere point of honor?"

But as he drew near the field another idea came to him. He had never fought a duel, although he had taken part in sudden frays, which were decidedly different from a cold-blooded, systematically arranged duel. He did not fear death or injury, although the surgeon, with his ghastly anecdotes of wounds and operations, was far from quieting.

Wallace Ayer was conscious of being afraid of but one thing which was, that he might prove weak or even cowardly at the last moment. How could any man know—he thought to himself—until he had been tested, whether or not, his nerves will fail him in the field; whether or not, when all the grim preparations of the duel are done, and he stands face to face with his adversary, and glances along the shining steel, he may weaken and show the white feather.

Few men and especially brave men, have gone to battle or to the duelling field without thoughts like these and Wallace Ayer had his full share of them.

When the buggy drew up at the side of the road a few yards from the lot where the meeting was appointed, they found a team already there, showing that their adversaries were in advance of them.

As they stepped from the wagon, Lee said to his friend in an undertone:

"You must take off that collar, Wallace. It makes too good a mark."

Ayer drew off the white band without a word, and then Lee stepped back and surveyed him from head to foot. He was dressed in plain black, and the color was not relieved in any way except by the face, a trifle paler than usual.

"You'll do," said Lee; "now come."

Dr. Mason had gone on in advance

and was waiting with the other party for them.

Ayer whispered a few final directions to his second.

The two friends entered the field and approached the group at the further end. As they drew near, Ayer raised his hat courteously, which salute was immediately returned by White and Parker; the philosophical old doctor smiling sardonically at this exhibition between men who were about to attempt each other's life.

Ayer after bowing, passed over the grass on toward the western end of the lot and waited. He glanced idly at the dark streak his footprints had made over the dewy grass-plot. A harmless green, scaly lizard distracted his attention, as it ran along the fence—the only living creature astir. It too was on murder bent, for it was chasing a beetle.

The sun was not yet over the trees,

and Frazier Peters peacefully sleeping, not half a mile away, was quite unconscious of the use being made of his property.

Parker and Lee, after a formal greeting, drew off to one side and quickly arranged the preliminaries. The ground was paced off from north to south, and marks made at twenty paces. There was a forest background at either end, and the disadvantages of sunlight was as evenly divided as possible by this arrangement. The air was as yet absolutely still, so there was no need of considering that element in laying out the ground. The seconds matched coins for the positions for their principals. Ayer drew the north, and his antagonist, the south.

It was agreed that the men should fire together at the counting of "one," "two," "three," and continue firing at will, until one fell, or the pistols were emptied.

Both seconds had brought cases of pistols and Parker's weapons were chosen as the best, on his assuring Lee that these particular revolvers had never been even seen by White. The pistols were loaded carefully, and one handed to each antagonist. They were then escorted to their positions, and Lee whispered a few final directions to his friend, entreating him to remain cool, aim low, and fire instantly on the word.

Lee knew that White was a famous shot, and had taken part in several affairs of this sort. He feared greatly that his friend would fall before he had the opportunity to deliver his fire, for White had the reputation of shooting exactly on the word and so crippling his adversary, without receiving the return fire.

The two principals took their positions and stood for a moment face to face, and then swung slowly sideways

until their right shoulders were opposite to each other.

White's dark complexion was darker than ever, and his eyes betrayed excitement, but he drew himself proudly to his full height and there was a scornful expression about his lips, and haughty defiance on his face, as he waited for the word, not doubting for one moment the result, and only surprised that a Yankee should dare meet him.

Ayer saw the expression of scorn and arrogance on the Southerner's face and all his pride came surging up.

Just as proudly and just as scornfully, he raised his weapon and listened to the words from Parker.

"Gentlemen, are you ready?"

"Ready!"

"Ready!"

"One."

Ayer's brown hair fluttered a trifle in the morning air, which was just stirring into life by the increasing power of the

sun, but his face and body were like a rock. With a stoical indifference to danger he thought only of his aim, and his hand was never steadier.

“Two.”

Lee saw a shadow pass over his friend's face, and his aim for a second wavered, but, instantly, it was gone, and Ayer's eyes gleamed with unnatural brilliancy, and the steel was once more firm.

“Three! Fire!”

The two reports were so nearly simultaneous, that no one ever knew which fired first.

Ayer wheeled half round, wavered and went down with a thud.

His second watching him intently, could not restrain a cry, as he sprang toward him. The Northerner lay on his face and his hand tightly clutched the smoking pistol. Lee rolled him over, and to his intense relief, Ayer opened his eyes and murmured :

"It's nothing—nothing, only a scratch—I have time for another shot," and with great effort, he sat up, supporting himself on his left arm, and gazing vaguely around.

Lee, the moment he found his friend was not dead, rushed for Dr. Mason. As he reached the group opposite him, he noticed for the first time that White was down also, and heard the surgeon say:

"It's no use. Poor fellow, he's done for. He cannot live ten minutes."

"Is White killed, doctor?" cried Lee.

"Yes," said Parker, looking up. "Your damned Yankee has killed the best shot in the South. He shall answer to me for this morning's work."

Without replying to Parker, Lee turned to the doctor and said:

"If White is dying, come to my man. You may save him yet if you are quick. For God's sake, come;" he added, as Dr. Mason hesitated.

When the shots were fired, Ayer had fallen, as though struck down by an invisible hand, but White had received his antagonist's fire without flinching, and was making a movement to re-cock his revolver, when he suddenly pitched forward, caught himself, pitched again, and then with a groan, sank gently to the ground, with a bullet through the lower part of his lungs. Blood gushed from his mouth, and the surgeon saw at a glance that his wound was fatal.

The dying man lay on his back, with his head and shoulders supported by Parker, when he heard Lee's voice. He opened his eyes, and speaking with an effort, whispered :

"Parker—Parker—no more blood shed on my account. Did I hear that the Yankee is hit? Bring him here. I want to—tell him something." And his eyes closed again and his head sank lower.

Dr. Mason turned sadly away, and

hastened to where Ayer had fallen. A short examination showed the surgeon that Ayer had been struck in the shoulder, and although his wound was severe, there was no immediate danger. Taking the wounded man in their arms, Lee and the doctor carried him carefully, to where the dying man lay.

When Ayer saw the pale face of his late enemy, flecked with flashes of red blood and heard his labored breathing, he forgot his own agony in the thought that he was responsible for this man's death. He spoke to him gently and regretfully. White opened his eyes and saw Ayer at his elbow.

He smiled feebly and then with all the bravery of his brave race, he summoned his last remnant of strength, and put his hand on Ayer's shattered arm. The Northerner conquered the pain the other's touch caused him, and taking the offered hand with his own left hand, he gently pressed it.

"Ayer," he murmured, "I am dying; but before I go, I forgive you. You others, Parker, doctor, Lee, are witnesses that I forgive him"—

Parker raised his head as his throat seemed to choke up. He continued:

"Ayer, my brother Dick will never forgive you. He will trail you down as a bloodhound. You must all tell him—forgive—but—it will do no good.

"Ayer, you're a brave man. I was a fool to think you a coward—and—now, I pay for it."

He paused for a moment, and Parker, now in tears, gently wiped the mouth of the dying man with his handkerchief. The doctor made an effort to stop his speaking, but White, with a weak gesture of impatience, waived him aside and resumed:

"I am not afraid to die—have always tried to be a Christian and a gentleman, and when one dies that way, there is nothing to fear—come closer. I can-

not see you—closer—so—. Now listen, you are mistaken about Clover, sweet Clover.”

He lingered on the name as though he loved it. Then with a stronger voice than with which he had previously spoken, he said, half raising on one elbow :

“Ayer, I give you a gentleman’s dying word—a gentle——”

Before he could finish the word, a rush of blood came and a second later, White had passed beyond human vengeance, or petty justice. A braver, better, nobler man in his death, than ever he had been in life. Showing at the last, the game qualities which have made the Anglo-Saxon masters of the modern world.

The group around White stood motionless for a moment. Even the stern old surgeon being visibly affected. Parker rose reverentially, and laying the dead man’s head on the grass, gently as

a woman, he spread his own long coat over the body of his friend. He then took off his cap, and speaking in a voice choked with emotion :

“My friends we have seen how a Christian gentleman and a Southerner can die, thinking not of himself, but of others. Let us hope we may meet our fate as bravely.” And bowing his head, he stood a moment in silent prayer, an example which the others willingly followed.

Dr. Mason was the first to speak. The old fellow cuffed his cheek sharply with the back of his hand, and said :

“Come, come now, we must attend to your wound, Mr. Ayer. Just hold him up, Lee, until I can snip up this sleeve,” and taking a pair of scissors from his vest pocket he slashed the sleeve to the collar, laying exposed the wound and Ayer’s right side.

“Phew!” said the surgeon, examining the wound :

“The first thing to do is to go after that ball. I don’t think the bone is broken. What’s this?”

He raised Ayer’s arm and found a large blood clot over the tendons in front of the arm pit. “That simplifies matters. The ball has passed through your arm, under the bone, and lodged in the breast muscles. Have you raised any blood?”

“No!” Ayer shook his head.

“Then the bullet is not in your lungs.”

With that the doctor tore open Ayer’s shirt, still wider and commenced to feel carefully over the breast muscles for the missing bullet. Ayer was strongly muscled, and his flesh so firm that the doctor was unable to locate the ball. After trying in vain for some moments, he stopped and searched for something in his satchel.

“My damn fool of an assistant has forgotten to put any anæsthetics in my

case, and you must be operated on at once, Ayer. That bullet must be found. If you were to be in good quarters, and to have proper medical attendance, it might not matter so much— Many a man down here, has lead in him.”

“I can do without anæsthetics,” replied Ayer. “Go ahead, doctor, and probe for the ball.”

Dr. Mason glanced at him with admiration. And, then selecting some long instruments from his case, he motioned to Lee and Parker to hold Ayer up properly. In five minutes, the bullet was located and cut out of the muscles toward the centre of the right breast, where it had lodged.

The ball had glanced along one of the ribs, without injuring any part of the lungs. The operation caused Ayer great suffering, but he seemed superior to pain, for his face bore almost a smile, and he did not stir until the doctor had finished.

Dr. Mason dropped his instruments back into the bag with a clatter, and said:

“Mr. Ayer, you are a Stoic. I saw much fortitude during the war, and had begun to think this generation inferior to mine, but you have shown true American nerve—and that poor fellow did too,” he added, nodding toward the silent figure lying on the grass.

A blanket was brought from the wagon and placed under Ayer. He was given, for the first time, a drink of brandy, and carried gently to the brook just below where it left the eventful trout pool. The blood stains were washed away, and his wound dressed by the side of the limpid, running stream. When the last bandage was in place, the doctor gave some hurried directions to Lee, in reference to the care of his friend, secretly advising him to put Ayer in some secluded spot until

his wound was healed and they could escape North.

The three men carried Ayer to the buggy. After shaking hands, Parker drew Lee aside and promised to conceal the events of the morning until the last possible moment, in order to give Lee an opportunity to get his friend out of the way of the law, and the swift and certain revenge of the dead man's brother, Richard White.

"Of course," added Parker, "after the coroner's inquest is over and when the pursuit is once started, I shall have to do my part, but you have my best wishes, at all events. I warn you that Richard White is persistent and very energetic. He will devote himself to revenging his brother's death. So, be on your guard."

The doctor and Parker saluted the occupants of the buggy, as it drove rapidly off in the direction of the town, and then turned to their mournful task.

What was mortal of Harvey White was wrapped in a blanket and laid in the bed of the wagon.

They drove slowly down to Peters' place, and before going up to the house, deposited their burden on the floor in the summerhouse, where Clover Gwynne and Wallace Ayer had their last interview.

Sweet, yellow-throated honeysuckle twined about the open doorway and arching casements, weighing the fresh morning air with all its dainty fragrance. The first long shafts of the rising sun poured through the lattice walls, making diamond shadow patterns dance across the floor, and run fantastic riot over the blanket-wrapped, inanimate Thing, lying there, at once, equally majestic and helpless.

Brilliant hued humming-birds darted hither and yon, like living jewels on the soft morning breeze, while the busy bees from the near by row of hives,

buzzed a droning accompaniment to the bird's fluttering wings. A meadow-lark alighted on the apex of the summerhouse roof—pausing a moment in his flight—he held upward his slender throat and trilled out a triumphant burst of silvery melody. A requiem for the passing soul on its journey to the Elysium fields of the Blessed Dead.

CHAPTER XII.

And that inverted Bowl they call the Sky
Where under crawling coop'd we live and die,
Lift not your hands to It for help—for It
As impotently moves as you or I.

—*Omar Khayyám.*

LATE that night, Ayer and Lee struck Buck Mountain, nearly twenty miles beyond Wainhill. They had driven until the afternoon, and had left the horse and buggy at an outlying farmhouse, the owner of which, Ben Smith, Lee knew could be relied upon.

Old Ben lived alone. Lee had thought of him the day before the duel, and in the hurry of preparation, had had the foresight to despatch a darkey with two horses, to the old man's for safe-keeping. The animals had reached there the night before and

were in first-class condition. On the arrival of the wounded man and his friend, old Ben made no remarks, but prepared a lunch of corn-pone and bacon, which with a little brandy to wash it down, served to sustain Ayer for renewed effort.

The horses were then saddled by Lee himself, and led out. Ayer, in spite of his protests that he did not feel weak, was strapped securely to the saddle, and Lee, after paying Ben Smith out of the stock of money he had with him, took the bridle of his friend's horse, and started down the road toward Avon.

When well out of sight of the house, Lee turned sharply into the open pine wood, and rode some distance by compass, until he came to an abandoned lumber road. - This he followed, slowly working up the mountain valley, until at dusk they emerged into a clearing.

Smoke could be seen in the distance,

and the two men rode slowly toward it — Lee stopping now and then to shout:

“Baxter—Hullo!—Will Baxter!”

As they were passing some large rocks on the left of the road, a strange figure slouched out from the shadow, with an abrupt command to halt.

“Who may you uns be?” the stranger demanded, “an’ what may you uns want with Will Baxter?”

“Will, you remember me?” replied Lee, “I am Howard Lee, who defended you in Richmond, two years ago, when the authorities had you up for making moonshine whiskey in Cumberland Gap.”

The old mountaineer brought down the butt of his long rifle with a thud, and stepping up to Lee, scrutinized him closely. When Baxter had fully satisfied himself that it was indeed the lawyer who had befriended him, he stretched out a gaunt hand and seized Lee’s with a hearty grasp of welcome.

"I'm mighty glad to see yer, Mr. Lee, you all dun me a power o' good wonst, an' yer kin jist count on Will Baxter fer not fergittin' it, nuther."

And then with a chuckle, as though it was the best joke in the world, he added:

"Blamed ef I didn't come near pluggin' you uns. I reckoned you uns wus them revenue fellers. I drawed a dead bead on that white rag, crossin' yer friend's breast, when you hollered out my name, jist in time to save him.

"What's the matter with yer friend? —hurt?"

"Baxter, I may as well tell you the whole story," replied Lee, "this is a friend of mine, Mr. Ayer, who had a difference of opinion with a gentleman down in the settlement, in consequence of which he has a broken shoulder.

"The sheriff is on our trail by this time. I knew of no safe place to take refuge, until I remembered that you had

a house up here, and then I said to myself: 'Will Baxter is the man who has courage to hide a man who was wounded in a square fight, and he will do it too.'"

"So I will, so I will," said the mountaineer. "I reckon the sheriff and his possey won't get you uns up here; not while Will Baxter kin pull a trigger. But, Mr. Lee, how about the other feller;—he get shot?"

"Shot dead," answered Lee.

The old moonshiner grinned at this welcome piece of news, and walked solemnly over to Ayer, and shook his free hand in token of the admiration, with which he now held his prowess. Then swinging his rifle over his shoulder, he led the way to the tumbled-down shanty, he called home.

As they passed up the narrow road, they were silently joined by three gaunt boys, whose ages ranged from thirteen to eighteen, and who "toted" rifles rather longer than themselves.

They fell in behind the men, Indian file, without exchanging looks or comment. At the first warning of the approach of the strangers, they had posted themselves along the road at intervals, behind trees and rocks,—one of the many adjuncts and precautions of the illicit manufacturer of moonshine whiskey, which the vigilance of the government authorities makes necessary among humble lovers of corn juice.

Ayer was so faint from his long ride that he had to be lifted from his horse—in fact, only the precaution Lee had taken in tying him to his saddle, had kept him from several ugly falls during the day's ride.

A stiff drink of Baxter's moonshine revived him, and he was able to swallow a little "hog and hominy," which formed the staple of the backwoodsman's fare.

After this wretched supper, Lee had a long interview with Baxter and it

was decided to send one of the boys to the nearest settlement on an old mule of Baxter's, to purchase some provisions fit for the wounded man to eat. Lee knew this might lead to a visit from the authorities, but he realized that Ayer must have good food, if he was to recover his strength.

The boy was given some money, and started on his errand.

Ayer, who had borne up bravely during the day, had now collapsed and had to be carried to a place of concealment, where, Baxter assured Lee, they could lie hidden in perfect safety.

This refuge proved to be Baxter's whiskey-still, deep buried in the forest, a mile back of the house. It was half cavern and half shanty, but would serve to keep out the weather. Here the mountaineer carried up most of his blankets, and Ayer was soon stretched on a comfortable bed.

After a renewed application of "moon-

shine," he fell into a heavy sleep, while Lee and Baxter sat on the log threshold and kept watch over him during the night.

Lee feared that the excessive fatigue and excitement of the day would bring on brain-fever, but fortunately no such symptoms appeared, and the next morning found him weak, but with less pain.

The boy arrived during the afternoon with some provisions, which Lee had prepared at once for his friend.

Young Baxter reported that in Wainhill, where he had been obliged to go, the town was in great excitement, and parties were being formed to hunt for them in every direction. This occasioned Lee and the mountaineer but little anxiety, as they felt quite safe in the loyalty of old Ben Smith, and even if he betrayed what he knew, the pursuers would only have a slight clue to work on.

So it proved, as the days went by—

Ezra Baxter at length reporting on his return from one of his expeditions that the search had been practically abandoned, although the fugitives had been traced to Ben Smith's, but without getting any satisfaction or information from the old man.

Ayer improved rapidly under the nursing of his friend, and in two or three weeks was able to walk around without feeling exhausted. He was almost well enough to travel, when one morning, Ezra Baxter returned from Wainhill with an ominous-looking document and a note.

Young Baxter said that while in town on the previous day, his attention had been directed to a notice on the fence surrounding the court house, and about which there was gathered a great crowd. As he could not read, he learned with some difficulty from others, that the notice referred to a reward offered for a Yankee, dead or alive.

He waited until night, and then sneaked up to the fence on all fours, where the notice was posted; he cut out the poster bodily with his jack-knife, leaving only a hole in the fence where the notice had been, to tell the story.

It seemed, according to Ezra's story, that while waiting for the cover of darkness to perform this exploit, he fortified himself with "corn juice," in quantities sufficient to loosen his tongue without impairing his energy.

While in this condition, early in the afternoon, he had entered a store to buy some lint, as directed by Lee. The clerk would not give him the proper kind until he explained that it was "for a wound—a gunshot wound." The man thereupon gave him what he wanted, without exhibiting any suspicion, but a tall, dark young lady, who was buying something at the same counter, seemed suddenly greatly interested in Ezra, and

after he made his purchase, followed him to the door.

The young mountaineer, though an awkward, overgrown lout, was not without his ideas of gallantry, and was greatly flattered when the young lady, with a dazzling smile, requested him to help her mount her horse. He willingly did so, in a most bungling manner.

"Thanks; so you have a wounded man at your house, have you?" said the young lady, as she gathered the reins of the horse and seemed to want to detain him.

Ezra blundered out a rambling reply, about "'Papp' being shot in the hand by accident."

"Too bad, I'm sure," replied the young lady, "it is very considerate of your family to buy lint, and you must be rich, too, with so much money to spend," she added, nodding toward Ezra's hand which still held the change

of a ten dollar bill he had given the shopkeeper.

Ezra, half drunk as he was, realized that he had probably betrayed his father's guests, and pulling himself together, he proceeded to tell a most intricate and mendacious tale. Finally he stopped, after hopelessly snarling up his story, and mopped, with his soiled shirt-sleeve, the beads of perspiration which had gathered on his forehead through the unaccustomed mental effort involved by overtaxing his imagination.

The girl had listened to his story with a smile, and when he paused, she asked him his name. Now Ezra was on firmer ground, and he promptly replied with a great show of truthfulness and veracity:

"John Barton."

The young lady eyed him sharply, and then said:

"All right, *Mr. Barton*, I wish to send a note to your poor old 'Papp.' Just wait a minute."

She hastily drew a letter from her pocket and taking the envelope, she tore it open and wrote on the inside, using the pommel as a desk, while the astonished mountaineer stood with staring eyes and wide open mouth. She then folded the note without addressing it, and gave it to Ezra, saying:

"Please give this to your wounded 'Papp,' and he will understand it if he is the man I think. Be careful, *Mr. Barton*, and be a little more prudent with your tongue, or you will get your 'Papp' and yourself into hot water."

With this warning, the girl cantered off, leaving poor Ezra in a dazed state, not knowing which way to turn. He finally wandered to the fence where his mule was tied, and sat there until it was dark enough to secure the poster, without detection.

After he had cut out the notice, he rode back as rapidly as his slow-paced mule and the darkness would permit,

and the next morning, with a scared face, presented the board with the note, to Ayer.

The Northerner opened the crumpled missive in nervous haste, and recognized a familiar hand. He called Lee, and read the note, or rather a portion of it, to him. The note ran as follows :

“DEAR WALLACE :

“Your messenger has stupidly exposed you to discovery and given me this chance to warn you.

“The sheriff has had deputies watching all the roads, but he has now given up pursuit.

“Richard White, however, is now in town, and knows that you are hidden in the mountains. He has quietly armed men to watch for you at all railway stations and has given orders that the country shall be scoured in out-of-the-way places.

“Be ready to defend yourselves, for he means to shoot on sight. I hope and pray you will escape.

“Oh Wallace ! You don't know how

178 Juleps and Clover

I have suffered since that horrible day. You don't understand, and you think terrible things of me.

"Let me come to you now, that you are in trouble, and I will show you that I am not so wicked as you think. For heaven's sake, send me a line if you won't let me see you.

"Your heartbroken

"CLOVER."

When Ayer finished reading, Lee snatched up the board which Ezra had hacked out of the fence, and read:

REWARD!!!

\$2,000.

The above reward will be paid upon
the delivery of the person,
dead or alive, of

WALLACE AYER;

To the Sheriff of Mackworth County:
At the County Court House:
In the Town of Wainhill.

(Signed) JAMES E. CAMPBELL,
Governor.

NOTICE!

In addition to the above reward, the sum of \$5,000 has been placed in my hands and will be paid upon the apprehension and delivery to me, of the body of the above-named—Wallace Ayer.

(Signed) ROBERT COOK,
Sheriff of Mackworth County,
North Carolina.

CHAPTER XIII.

And not a drop that from our Cups we throw
For earth to drink of, but may steal below
To quench the fire of Anguish in some Eye
There hidden—far beneath, and long ago.

Omar Khayyám.

WHILE Ayer and Lee were studying the Governor's Reward Will Baxter strode up with a troubled look on his face and his rifle uneasily balanced in his hand.

"Lem's got a feller down thar below the house that wants to speak to you uns, Mr. Lee," the mountaineer remarked. "He's tony, and don't look like he wus much dangerous; Lem's got him hilt up, an' I jist come up here to tell you uns."

"It must be some one has followed Ezra, Howard," said Ayer, "you would

better go and see who it is. It may be some message in connection with this note. I'll wait here."

Lee went with Baxter and in a quarter of an hour he returned accompanied by a man who proved on near approach to be Frazier Peters, but not the placid, dignified gentleman that Ayer had known.

Peters was thinner by many pounds, and his clothes looked as though he had slept in them a week. His face, which he mopped freely, as he picked his way up the steep path, looked haggard, and showed traces of prolonged fatigue. He brightened up a bit when he saw Ayer, and shook hands cordially.

"Hullo, Ayer, my boy," he cried, with a trace of his former manner. "I never expected to see you alive again. A little pale and thin, but not worse than I am. I've lost twenty pounds this month, and I reckon I must have

lost two more standing in the sun down there, with that fiendish young barbarian pointing his gun at my head. He made me hold up my hands too—Oh, Lord! I thought I should drop dead in my tracks.”

And Peters mopped his feverish brow.

“I’m going to write to the governor to-morrow to send troops up here and clear all these moonshiners out. The idea of allowing a child of that age to lug around a gun bigger than himself and to point it at any stranger who comes along—it’s preposterous! Then his dad walks up and says:

“‘It’s just a mistake and no offence meant.’ Why it’s an outrage, but then the entire state is run infamously, from the sheriff up. I’m going back to Virginia—I’m ashamed of my native state—ashamed, sir. Got anything good to drink up here?” And Frazier Peters sank down on a log to catch his breath, and fanned himself with his slouch hat.

Ayer brought from the hut a half empty bottle of whiskey made by Baxter, and poured some out for Peters. This and a few minutes' rest restored Peters to something like his usual calmness. Ayer knew that it must be important business that had brought Peters in quest of him, but wisely allowed the Carolinian to take his time in stating the nature of his errand.

When Frazier had fully recovered his breath he apologized for talking about his own annoyances before asking how Ayer was, but on being assured that his wounds were practically healed, he settled himself comfortably with the log at his back, and taking another sip of the whiskey, which he pronounced "vile," but which nevertheless, he consumed to the last drop. He told them of the events in Wainhill since the duel.

"Ayer, you know I used to be a pretty easy-going fellow, but I assure

you I have not had a moment's peace since that duel. That morning I rose early and drove to Wainhill to inspect some horses that had just arrived, so I missed Parker and the doctor when they came to the house with White's body, and I did not hear a word about the fight until that afternoon.

"I reached the Metropolitan Club about lunch time, and found Colonel Bel- lows, with two or three other gentlemen there. It was a powerful hot day and we were all thirsty, so I ordered Pete to make a mint julep.

"He's a miserable nigger—that Pete —knows nothing about mixing drinks, but he finally got some sort of stuff stirred up, and we were sitting quietly on the porch, sipping it, when who should ride up to the club but Sheriff Cook, and behind him two or three men leading horses.

"They rode right over the grass up to the house, and totally without invi-

tation from us; the sheriff dismounted and came unto the porch.

“Being Southern gentlemen, we ignored this most extraordinary proceeding, and invited him to join us as politely as we could. At the same time explaining just why the julep happened to be so bad.

“Instead of acting like a gentleman and a man of honor, this specimen of poor white trash said :

“‘Drat your julep, sirs; I don’t want no julep—what I want is men, and mighty quick too. There has been murder done here this morning by a damned Yankee, and he is escaping.

“‘I summons you all as citizens of these yere United States of America to come along with me and catch him.

“‘There are horses enough out yere to tote you all—drunk or sober, to Jericho.’

“Yes, sir,” continued Peters, after taking another pull at Baxter’s bad

moonshine whiskey, "He addressed us with marked disrespect, sir, and that ain't all. He turned to Pete, and sings out to him :

" ' Here, you nigger, get them there men's hats. Now come, I'll swear you in as we ride along. '

" We protested that we were gentlemen, and could not be expected to go riding around rough shod over the country catching runaway Yankees, and besides, I hadn't my riding clothes. Nothing but just a light duck suit. But Cook would not listen to us—as I intimated before, he has not the instincts of a gentleman.

" Major Rathburn begged to be excused, as he was exceedingly anxious concerning Mrs. Rathburn's health. He explained he was just on the point of riding over to Dr. Mason's to confer with him in reference to Mrs. Rathburn's delicate health, but Cook was merciless.

"During the major's argument with Cook, Colonel Bellows took a short cut home, out through the back windows of the club, but two of the sheriff's men caught him and fetched him back, and swore him in with the rest of us, so in the end, we all had to go.

"The sun was terrific, and we had no lunch, and no dinner either for that matter. That night I patrolled about five miles of road, and my horse was such a beast!

"Well, gentlemen, that sheriff gave us no rest for a week—kept us prancing all over the country, until I was worn to skin and bone. I didn't get a decent drink for days at a time."

Peters heaved a reminiscent sigh and continued:

"The only redeeming feature about the whole thing was that we couldn't find you. I didn't understand then, and I don't now, Mr. Ayer, what the row was about," holding up his hand

warningly as Ayer was about to speak —“I am not here to inquire; but when I got home again and saw Dr. Mason I learned that you were pretty badly hurt, and probably could not have had strength enough to get very far away.

“Joy seemed delighted to have me back, although I must have looked like anything but a gentleman, as I had not shaved for days, and my duck suit looked, if possible, worse than these clothes do.

“Well, to resume—I was in bed for a week or more. Doctor said it was over-exertion in the sun. I said it was the awful stuff that scoundrel Cook gave us to eat and drink. At any rate, when I got around again, matters were worse than ever.

“Clover, it seems, had been ill too, and was looking listless and pale. I did not know what the trouble with her was, because she is such a close-mouthed girl, until yesterday evening,

when she came home on a gallop and said she had found out where you were, Ayer, and that she was going to you, and that I must go with her. We tried to dissuade her, but nothing would do. She would have gone alone if I had refused.

“So here I am, and Clover is down at the foot of the valley, waiting to see you, Ayer. Oh, such a frightful ride. How she knew the way is more than I can imagine. I have had all the riding I want for a year to come.”

Ayer sat for some minutes, buried in thought, as Peters finished, then starting suddenly to his feet, he turned without a word, and went down the path leading to Baxter's hut, leaving Lee to look after Peters as best he might.

Frazier Peters watched him out of sight, and then said to Lee:

“Do you know, Lee, it never occurred to me until yesterday, that the

quarrel originated in Clover's carelessness. It does beat all, how careless some women are! I had until then believed in the story which has been circulated around town, that it was some confounded row about North and South. Joy said I was blind, and I believe she was right; about right, sir."

As Ayer descended the valley leading from Baxter's house, his mind was filled with conflicting emotions. He could not refuse to see the girl who had braved so much to come to him, but he felt that no good could result from any interview with Clover.

It was cruel to be rough with her, or to reproach her, and more cruel still, to be cold and distant. Relent, he could not and would not, when once betrayed as he had been.

Clover Gwynne saw him in the distance, and for a second her face flushed with pleasure. She rose from the rock on which she was seated, as Ayer

bravely approached, and with a smiling face, she nodded welcome.

They stood for several moments looking into each other's eyes, without speaking. The woman anxiously noted the traces that suffering had left on the face of the man. At length she said, coolly enough:

"You received my note?"

Ayer bent his head in assent, and after a pause, Clover said:

"I have not come here, Wallace, to reproach you, or to ask anything of you, as in wild impulse yesterday, when I sent that note. I simply desire to have a talk with you, and to set myself straight in your eyes, which is certainly my right; so whether you wish it or not, you *must* hear me out.

"I want nothing from you to-day, except silence. I shall not bore you long."

"Miss Gwynne," said Ayer, "I am absolutely at your service. Only, do not feel called upon to make any ex-

planations. None are required. What has been done, is past and we can only forget. Sometimes it is wiser not to open old wounds, especially when it can serve no useful purpose. So I would advise you to tell me nothing which you may in after years regret. However, I have no bitterness toward you—none whatever.”

“I appreciate your delicacy, Mr. Ayer,” said the girl, with a touch of irony in her tone. “But it seems to me that it is serving a very useful purpose—to me at least, if I can regain your respect; more than that, I should not dare to take, from one so prone as you, too hasty conclusions.

“Don’t you think, Wallace, that you might have given me a chance—the advantage of a doubt—before you condemned me off-hand, and punished another?” Her body shook with suppressed sobs. She hesitated a moment, and continued:

"But stay—this is not what I came to say—it is too much in line with the way in which you talked to me on a certain occasion.

"Listen to me, and you shall hear this story truthfully. I have known Harvey White all my life. His uncle owned the adjoining plantation to ours, in Georgia. We grew up together, and even as children, we were great friends; but I never knew any stronger feeling for him or any other man, until my father, who is a proud and stern man, and who, despising the Whites, contemptuously included Harvey in his denunciation with the rest of the White family.

"As I was saying, until my father called me in one day from the veranda, where I was sitting with Harvey, who had just called, and informed me that 'I was no longer a child, and must associate with none but my equals.'

"As there was no one of that descrip-

tion, in his opinion, for miles around, this meant no companions for me whatever, except the rare occasions when visitors from a distance came to visit us, and stayed for weeks at a time.

"I obeyed my father about a week, and then met Harvey half by accident. He laughed my father's orders to scorn, and convinced me that I had no spirit if I submitted.

"I had no mother to advise me, no sister of which to make a confidant, and my two brothers, being older, only noticed me when they wanted to find fault or tease me.

"To be brief, I got into the habit of meeting Harvey secretly and often. I was lonely, and craved sympathy. He had known my mother, and I used to love to talk of her to him. I never dared to mention her name to father. My old black mammy had warned me not to mention her, for his grief was so intense they despaired of his sanity for

months after her death, and mammy had to lock my mother's rooms up—we children used always to walk on tiptoe, and look over our shoulders, when we passed those locked doors.

“Little by little, Harvey became my hero, just in proportion, as it became difficult to see him. In my foolish imagination, I invested him with attributes, the poor fellow certainly did not possess. When at last my father discovered my disobedience, he said not a word, but sent me post-haste to a boarding school in Richmond. Harvey came into his money shortly after this, and went to Richmond also, ostensibly to study. I had but few chances to see him there, but he was seldom out of my thoughts.

“And so it has gone on for years. Harvey always declared that he loved me, and I believe he did—but he never seemed anxious to marry me. Except, that it was tacitly understood that

somewhere in the vague distant future we should be married, and until that time came, each was to be free. Harvey however, always followed me around the country—just as he came to Wainhill last month—though he came here, I must admit, in consequence of a too frequent mention of a certain Wallace Ayer in my letters.

“You are probably wishing to ask me whether I loved Harvey White, or not. I can scarcely answer—anxious as I am to conceal nothing from you.

“Still, I suppose I did give Harvey the love that comes more from habit and association than from spontaneous sympathy—the sort of love that *must* love something, and which turns to whatever object is close at hand—the first love—the half love of a child.

“In the light of these terrible weeks just passed, I have realized that I loved Harvey White because he represented ‘man’ to me. When you came into my

life, I saw the mighty difference between what I had *imagined* love to be, and what it actually *is*. I loved you because it was heaven on earth to be with you.

“My whole being seemed attuned to the music of the heavenly spheres, when I thought of you. The mere touch of your hand thrilled me from head to foot. I used to get up at break of day, steal out of the house, and climb to the top of the woodland hill beyond the pool, and holding high my arms to the rosy east, shout to the rising sun, my great love for you. My heart was so full of its wonderful new happiness, it seemed to me that nothing but the sea, sky and air was big enough to hold it all.”

Clover sank to the ground. She seemed to have been unaware of the presence of her auditor. Suddenly she looked up from where she knelt, and said :

“I see polite, well-bred disbelief expressed in your face, but because you

cold-hearted, restrained Northerners cannot understand, and are not equal to a warmth of feeling, such as we know, you should—I must ask that you withhold your judgment until I finish, and then—but I care little what your judgment may be now.

“I find myself taking a strange delight in letting you know how much I have loved you.

“But where was I in my story, that I came to tell,” and she smiled like a corpse. “Oh yes! so matters drifted on—just as for a while we drifted, you and I, neither of us caring whither the current led.

“My father was mortified, but he was growing old, and could not control me. My friends were scandalized, and there is no disguising the fact, that many unkind and untrue things were said of me—some people think a woman cannot have a man’s devotions and have nothing more.

"But I cared little for what the world said, although when last month I saw that Howard Lee believed those silly tales, it did hurt me just a bit. During all this time, I have had many other men devoted to me, but Harvey was always at my elbow, ready to do my slightest bidding, and he never quite lost control of me. The control that I gladly yielded, for his was a strong, coarse nature, that answered to something in mine.

"He was good to lean upon; and then, he seemed always to be standing in the background, with that provoking, contemptuous smile of his, at any one's presuming to aspire to the girl of whom he felt so sure."

Clover dropped down exhausted; resting on one knee, she looked at Ayer beseechingly:

"You said when you reproached me that evening by the pool, that you could forgive everything but the lie I told

you, when I said I loved you. It was no lie. It was true. Beautiful and true. And I am left wondering where such a gorgeous fabric has gone—for gone it is: like a thief in the night, it has stolen away, and I am left desolate, with all the broken bits of my beautiful rainbow lying in a heap at my feet. What have you done with it? What have you done to me? What have you done to the playmate of my childhood?

“The love I had given him before I knew you, did not beggar you. You! you!” she cried, as she now strode back and forth in front of him, with all the animal intensity of a caged tigress.

“You, to exact absolute inexperience from the girl you do the high honor to offer the sharing of your life. Can you name all the women in whom you have been interested? Can you number your love affairs?”

Clover waited for him to answer. Ayer's head was bowed on his arms.

He made a motion of dissent, without looking up, and she went on:

"It is all over now, and I see clearly what made me care for you; for there is no use denying that I did care for you. You came from a world in which I had never lived. A world that was mine by right of birth and beauty. A world that I had dreamed of. You taught me in that world of yours that there was something more to life than provincial dandies and a languid existence in the shade of a plantation porch. I thought my past over. It looked full of nothingness and petty flirtations; with one great strong infatuation, which had overshadowed all else, which had nearly broken my father's heart, and tarnished my name, young as I was. I determined to break with it and him forever. And I turned to you, Wallace Ayer, for aid.

"Harvey White had become hateful to me; all things associated with him

became hateful, and yet—I distrusted the strength of his influence over me—but what if I loved him after all? and what if this feeling for you, was only another passing fondness, I argued. So, when he came to Petersdale last month, I met him unchanged in demeanor. I saw him again and again—repeatedly—often when you had no suspicion of it, and each interview confirmed me in my abhorrence of his personality.

“Can’t you understand my need to know the truth, Mr. Ayer? After all, it was only justice to you.

“With a Southern man in your place, I would have told him the entire story, feeling sure that he would have forgiven me, but you were so pitiless and cold. The very anecdotes you told from time to time, warned me that concealment was my only chance to retain your respect, and this deception, believe me, was the only sin I committed

against my love for you. Absolutely, the only one. I feared to trust your magnanimity and your boasted knowledge of a woman's heart.

"There is little more to say, except that when you burst upon me in the growing dark, I was thinking, and thinking oh! so earnestly, of how I could go to you, and ask your help—ask you to take me away from Wainhill—away from the South, and poor Harvey White.

"As he talked to me while you lay listening, I was thinking how different he was from my chosen lover, the man whom I adored, and then—you came upon me, white with anger, and as deaf to reason as this log; I saw that I was mistaken in you too.

"I feared, for a moment you meant to kill me—before you stopped talking; I hoped you would.

"A man such as you could not understand me: my emotions and affections

are too complex—you do not understand, or believe me now.”

Clover finished the last words softly with a persuasive note of sadness in her voice, as though half hoping he would make some overtures of reconciliation. As she waited for him to answer, she looked at him appealingly, and her hands twitched nervously at her riding habit. While she waited, the moments seemed to lengthen into years.

Finally, he raised his head and looked over and beyond her into the hazy blue of the mist, hanging on the opposite mountain side. He hesitated. She listened to his inarticulate protestations and scrutinized his face closely. Then she rose and said, with chilling hauteur:

“Say no more, Mr. Ayer. I did not expect anything but the hearing I have fortunately been granted. I did not come with the expectation that you would believe me. I know nothing can change matters now, but there will

come a day when your pride and self-sufficiency will fail you, and then perhaps, you will understand.

"I am going back with Mr. Peters—poor man—he is quite worn out. Please go tell him that I am waiting for him."

Ayer sat in silence and let the request go by unheeded. Clover repeated it, and he looked up. She added, coolly :

"You are trying to think of something to say to me that will pacify me, and at the same time, let you off easily and gracefully. Don't be so punctilious, pray. Your society manners are hardly adequate for an occasion such as this. It's rather late in the day, don't you think to begin trying to save my feelings in this matter," she sneered.

"Suppose you do what you asked me to do, the last time we met. 'Obey without further conversation.' We have each explained things to the other and

I, at least, have nothing more to say, or to listen to; may I again request you to call Mr. Peters, as it is growing late?

"No, I won't go to the house, thank you. Good-bye, Mr. Ayer."

A few minutes later, Mr. Peters found Clover Gwynne waiting for him on her horse, which she had mounted without help. He looked curiously at her face, but she kept it turned away from him, and rode in front all the way down the narrow bridle-path, until they were far from Buck Mountain, and the night had fallen.

But Frazier Peters, as he watched the youthful figure in front of him, saw enough to make him shake his head sadly, and as he murmured pityingly to himself:

"Poor little girl, poor little girl—and we were all so happy this summer. I don't understand the way things are run in this world. It doesn't seem fair to

her—and then that Northerner— It's all very fine, to look after honor, but it's mighty tiresome when they make such an infernal row about it."

CHAPTER XIV.

Whose secret Presence, through Creation's veins
Running Quicksilver-like eludes your pains;
Taking all shapes from Máh to Máhi; and
They change and perish all—but He remains;

A moment guess'd—then back behind the Fold
Immerst of Darkness round the Drama roll'd
Which, for the Pastime of Eternity,
He doth Himself contrive, enact, behold.

Omar Khayyám.

AYER returned to his friends in a very sullen mood, and it was only with the utmost difficulty that Baxter and Lee could induce him to discuss plans for leaving the country; a move that Lee well knew must be made at once.

"It's quite wrong to Baxter's family here," urged Lee, "to expose them to the chance of having a fight with the sheriff. Then, if you are taken, a trial will be additional scandal and would

probably compromise Miss Gwynne beyond redemption. You ought to think of that too, after her plucky conduct to-day, Wallace.

"It's all very well to say that you're not afraid of Richard White, but what good can result of more bloodshed?"

"Why will you not come to Canada with me, as we originally planned, and let this row blow over. There is nothing to be gained by staying here."

"I suppose that you're right, Howard," said Ayer, in an ugly mood. "I hate this country, and will be glad to leave it; but on the other hand, I hate the appearance of running away. I'm no coward."

This was trying Lee's unselfish patience a bit too far. He had run the risk of offending for life, his old time friends, had nursed Ayer through three weeks of hardship, and felt he owed some deference to his judgment. For the first time, through all the trouble

in which they had been involved by Ayer's impetuosity, he answered him impatiently :

"Very well then, stay here, if you want to, but White is certain to track us down. I don't suppose you're fool enough to give yourself up to be tried by a jury, drawn from a section in which Harvey White was so popular.

"Baxter and his boys will take a hand in the fight and there will be half a dozen innocent men killed, and the rest of us very properly hanged. Why won't you act reasonably, old man, and go to Canada while you can get away quietly. Once there, you can remain in peace through the winter, and get entirely over your wounds.

"If White is really so anxious to find us, he can easily follow us into the woods up there, and we'll meet him on equal terms. So come, let's start to-night," and Ayer yielded a reluctant consent.

They made immediate preparations for their departure, taking food, provisions and some of Baxter's bad moonshine liquor, in order that they might not be forced to call upon untrustworthy strangers for sustenance.

Baxter accompanied them to a remote railroad station toward the West, guiding them across the mountains by lonely roads in the night.

As a matter of due precaution, two of Baxter's sons—leaving one on guard at home—accompanied them with their trusty guns, until they were well away from the suspected neighborhood. The journey was a fatiguing one, and perilous for Ayer, lasting nearly a week, on account of their having to proceed so slowly, but it was finished at last, and the small town of Pacton reached just before daybreak.

Leaving the two friends in hiding on the outskirts of the little settlement, the mountaineer rode to the railway

station and learned that the Knoxville Express was due in an hour.

He had great difficulty in persuading the station agent to flag the train, but finally succeeded in overcoming his reluctance with a two dollar bill.

A silent, sleepy looking fellow lying on a bench in a dusty corner of the waiting-room, exhibited deep concern in the conversation. Baxter had not failed to observe him.

"You uns kin jist git on the train an' leave ter me the fixin' o' him," said Baxter on his return.

The train was flagged, and after bidding Baxter good-bye, Ayer and Lee mounted the platform, and as the train slowly drew out, Lee brought to Ayer's notice, the figure slouching carelessly in the doorway, saying :

"Baxter will keep an eye on him, never fear."

And Baxter did. Even while he assisted Ayer on the moving train, old

Baxter had one eye on the stranger, and one hand on the trigger of his trusty gun.

As the train thundered away and disappeared in a cloud of dust, the man shuffled over to where the telegraph ticked spasmodically in the corner. As he reached out his hand to the instrument, Baxter, who had slipped up silently behind him, knocked his arm up in the air.

The man started nervously, and looked over his shoulder.

"I reckon you'd jist as well come along 'o me, young feller," said the mountaineer.

"Who the devil are you? Why should I go with you?" replied the other in astonishment.

"This is why," said the mountaineer, grimly tapping the lock of his long rifle with a significance that was not lost on the amateur detective. The latter glanced at the station agent—the

only man stirring at that early hour—in mute appeal for aid, but that worthy person was wise in his generation and knew the mountaineers too well. He was absorbed in contemplation of the luxurious crop of jimpson-weed, which could be seen from the narrow-paned window.

“Come,” said Baxter, and the man passed out of the door into the gray mists of the morning, with the gaunt figure of the determined mountaineer treading on his heels, prodding him none too gently, now and then with the muzzle of his rifle.

A farmer driving a cow to pasture, in an outlying settlement, a little after sunrise that morning, saw a scared, dust covered man mounted on a mule and leading a horse, while behind him rode a threatening form clad in mountaineer's clothes, and carrying a rifle of extraordinary length, urging him on toward the mountains.

This was all the news of his young detective that Mr. Richard White was able to gather, on his visit of investigation to Pacton, a few days later.

“And if the wine you drink, the lip you press,
End in what All begins and ends in—Yes;
Think then you are TO-DAY what YESTERDAY
You were—TO-MORROW you shall not be less.”

Omar Khayyám.

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